



From the “Mantle” to Expertise

The Arc of Creative Partnerships

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University of Colorado at Boulder



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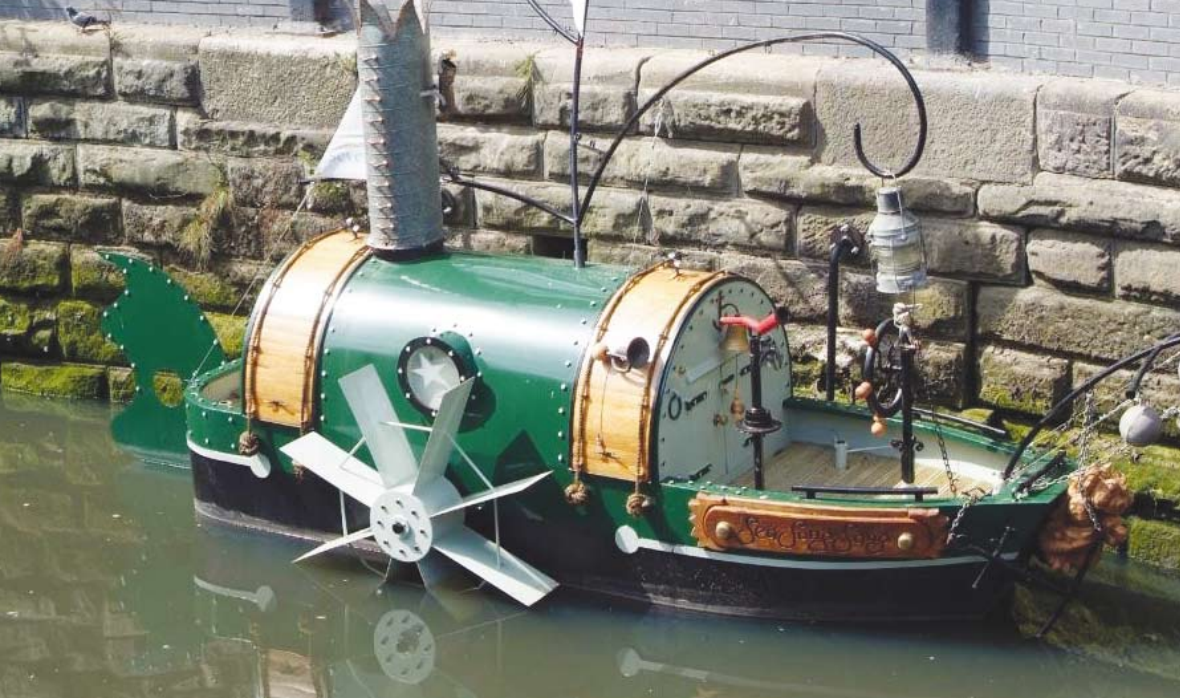
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The Ouseburn Valley rises steep, green, and shrouded in mist where the Ouseburn River flows to its confluence with the Tyne. With time and tide, the river played a key role during Newcastle's Industrial Revolution. Coal was trundled along the Victoria Tunnel and loaded onto wherries—local barges—at low tide and then, with the shift to high tide, shipped to the mighty Tyne. Crowded tenement housing packed close to the factories and warehouses that once lined the shore—glass and pottery factories, chemical and iron foundries, paint, lead, and engine works, as well as mills for flax and flour. But as these industries declined in the 20th century, the buildings were abandoned and the slums cleared. Many factories were torn down, while other warehouses still stand.

Today the Ouseburn River sees little traffic. At low tide, it's naught but a trickle with its water moving murkily among the rocks and litter. Small boats that have seen better days tip toward shore, dry landed at best. But one small boat along the Ouseburn particularly catches the eye. Like a child's toy ship with cranks and gears galore and a propeller set to spin, the round-barreled boat is brightly painted and festooned with a tall mast sporting a flag. Moored snugly against a seven-storey brick building, the "magical story boat" was built by artist Andy Comley with recycled materials. Andy worked with children from nine schools in the North East to help him envision the boat, and one of the children gave it its musical name—the "Sea Song Sang." The boat captures the imaginative new journeys that have recently begun in the valley.



The boat's building is an old Victorian warehouse that rises above the quay wall. Once a storage site for flour and cattle food, the completely refurbished building now houses Seven Stories, the Centre for Children's Books (2007). On its website, the museum curators explain: "Seven Stories is the only exhibition space in the UK dedicated to the celebration of British children's literature. Our changing programme of exhibitions is designed to spark the imaginations of children and adults, and inspire exciting new work."

And yet, much of the lower Ouseburn Valley has set its sails for such innovative regeneration. A nearby building, The Brickworks, provides studio spaces for filmmakers, sculptors, potters, and other artists and designers. A new theatre—The Round—provides rehearsal and performance space for a local theatre company. Xsite architecture is but a stone's throw from Seven Stories and serves both this community and others with its inventive designs. While derelict buildings still line the shore, plans are afoot for the entire valley. Indeed, the *Regeneration Strategy for the Lower Ouseburn Valley* sets a vision for a "mixed use sustainable urban village, whereby job creation and living opportunities can live side by side with cultural and heritage facilities" (Newcastle City Council, 2003). Thus the Ouseburn is an exciting mix of old and new—with new spaces taking over old places, all in an effort to revitalize this unique section of Newcastle for future generations.

But who will fill these spaces and continue to create new places in the future? Who will be the next generation of artists, sculptors, filmmakers, architects, and curators to work in the studios and museums of the area? One possible answer comes from Creative Partnerships (2003), which is “the government’s flagship creativity programme for schools and young people focused on the most deprived communities of England.” In essence, “the aspiration behind Creative Partnerships is to foster creativity in schools with a view to creating long-term structural change across the education system as a whole” (Parker, 2007, p.1).

Thus the links between the Ouseburn Valley and the efforts of Creative Partnerships are strong as they both concentrate on deprived communities much in need of regeneration. When factories close and tenements are cleared, people lose livelihoods, and they must seek out new ways of living or go under. When schools stay mired in traditional curricula, children lose opportunities for language, and their teachers stagnate without an infusion of innovative professional development. Cities, systems, and human beings are deeply interconnected and depending on the confluence of context, time, and circumstance, they are integrally linked to aspiration, flexibility of thinking, willingness to take risk and persist in collaboration with others.

On the website of Seven Stories (2007), the museum curators suggest: “Some people say there are only seven stories in the world but a thousand different ways of telling them. Seven Stories is about the thousand ways.” Similarly, over the years since its inception, Creative Partnerships has worked to tell the tales of its efforts. The Research Director of CP, David Parker (2007), has recently assembled a set of booklets to capture current findings entitled *This much we know...* In the opening to the *Research Digest 2002-2006*, he writes:

Because Creative Partnerships is such a varied and complex initiative, and because it takes place in a range of different localities and contexts, evaluation and research to date have been disparate and served several functions... To this end CP needs now and in the future simple accessible “stories” which can exemplify its instinctiveness and purpose. At the same time, it needs data that demonstrate quality of delivery, fitness for purpose and value for money. (pp. 1-2)

This monograph is designed to deliver yet another CP story, though it is more complex than simple. Of course, in literature stories are fictitious and marked by the author's skill in spinning a tale of the imagination. But this is a research story, marked by data collection and analysis, including audio-recorded interviews, close observations, the collection of artifacts, and the careful combing of all for the patterns within. This is no tale of fiction. Still, it is struck by the power of narrative with characters that develop over time, settings that shift, and themes that emerge.

In this research story, we will ultimately return to the Ouseburn quayside with a group of six and seven-year-old children and their teachers as they learned to take on the mantle of architectural expertise and the work of regeneration in powerful ways. But before we get to the specifics, we must put this particular research story in its larger context.

A Short History of Research at Bexhill

This is not the first research story I've told about Creative Partnerships. For over four years, I've been conducting research on the partnership between Bexhill Primary School in Sunderland and County Durham's Theatre Cap-a-Pie. CP first invited me to Bexhill in the spring of 2003, and on my very first visit members of Cap-a-Pie were there to conduct a week-long drama workshop with a class of older children. Over the years, I've documented the developing partnership between the two institutions, concentrating on the role of drama in the lives of teachers, artists, and children. With my colleague, Shirley Brice Heath, we told the story of the first year of this partnership in a set of booklets entitled *Dramatic Learning in the Primary School* (Heath & Wolf, 2005). These booklets followed the four teachers who formed the Teacher Research Team and their children across a variety of grade levels and through a variety of dramatic experiences, including work with Cap-a-Pie.

As the work progressed, my research honed in on two Bexhill teachers, Linda Nesbitt and Lesley Watson, as they developed a close working relationship with the two founding members of Theatre Cap-a-Pie, Gordon Poad and Mark Labrow. These four adults and the children in Linda's Year Two class together created a pirate play.



Over a period of several months, the children verbalized suggestions for script lines that the adult actors performed. The adults scribed the children's ideas and dialogue, continually making suggestions for revision. Yet, the flow of critique was not unidirectional from the adults to the children, for the children critiqued the adults' decisions as well. The months of work resulted in a play, *The Amazing Adventures of Mary Lou and the Ice Cream Pirates* that Mark, Gordon, and other company members performed in their theatre, The Store. I documented this second research story in *A Playwright's Life for Me! Young Children's Language and Learning Through Drama* (Wolf, 2006).

The third research story showcased yet another collaboration between Linda, Lesley, Gordon, Mark and the children in both Year Two classes—for Lesley moved from her teaching assignment in Reception to Year Two in the third year of my study. Here the adults reached the height of their Creative Partnerships collaboration. Together they carefully planned and critiqued every aspect of the work, which concentrated on child-created scenes from a popular children's picturebook, *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* (Van Allsburg, 1984). That research is detailed in *The Mysteries of Creative Partnerships* (Wolf, 2008).



Combined, these three pieces of research analyse the learning and language development of children engaged in dramatic activity. In the creation of their pirate play and other shorter scenes, the children had ample opportunities for comparing and contrasting, using hypothetical language, posing and answering questions of substance, utilising sophisticated vocabulary, analysing character and theme, learning about narrative structure, experiencing ensemble, and growing through critique as they weighed the pros and cons of each of their creative decisions. The research also highlights the increasingly collaborative relationship among the adults. The success of this professional development exchange hinged on (1) the strong focus on students' learning, (2) the adults' long-term commitment to the work, (3) the very different kinds of expertise the adults came to share, and (4) the adults' excitement and engagement with continual professional learning, which led back to substantive language and learning opportunities for the children involved.

This fourth and final research story highlights the separation of this creative partnership, as the teachers Linda and Lesley went on to a unique project on Ouseburn regeneration with their children that they created, executed, and continually critiqued without the help of the theatrical artists. This may seem ironic and even antithetical to the goals of Creative Partnerships in bringing artists or "creative practitioners," teachers, and school children together. On the CP website (2003), its stated goals include developing:

- the creativity of young people, raising their aspirations and achievements
- the skills of teachers and their ability to work with creative practitioners
- schools' approaches to culture, creativity and partnership working; and
- the skills, capacity and sustainability of the creative industries

Yet, separating creative practitioners and teachers represents the ultimate goal of Creative Partnerships. The intention has always been to change creative practices in schools with the help of artists, but for the schools and their teachers to eventually take up these practices on their own. Schools like Bexhill, which were involved with CP from the beginning, had entered the fourth phase of their Creative Partnerships arrangement. An in-house CP document explains, "Phase 4: CPs develop and implement an exit strategy.

This would typically involve: Continuing to develop the most successful core schools to establish them as ‘exemplar’ schools which will act as beacons of good practice after the departure of the CP programme.” Thus, the intense financing and artistic support of Phase 1 CP would eventually fade away as schools and teachers took on these regenerative roles for themselves.

Regeneration has always been at the heart of Creative Partnerships, as is independent ownership of the process. Artists and teachers were expected to learn from each other, but ultimately take what they learned and move on. As a result, this research highlights the fourth of Creative Partnerships’ goals, specifically “the skills, capacity and sustainability of the creative industries.” Although the other three goals will be closely examined, the focus here is really on the dramatic change in two Bexhill teachers, Linda and Lesley, in their ability to sustain the creative industries with a smaller but no less significant concentration on the changes in the dramatic artists, Gordon and Mark.

Over the four years of this study, I typically visited Bexhill for five three-day visits during each academic year. I timed my visits to observe planning meetings with Linda, Lesley, Gordon, and Mark as well as specific workshops to follow. During every visit I audio-recorded multiple interactions, including Drama Club sessions led by Linda and Lesley, the children’s interactions with Theatre Cap-a-Pie, as well as classroom drama lessons or debriefing sessions led by the teachers to ask the children their opinions about how the work was going. In addition, I conducted interviews with all the adults involved—sometimes in small groups or pairings and sometimes individually—and I interviewed the children as well. I also collected pertinent artifacts, including children’s writing and sketches, teachers’ plans, actors’ scripts, etc.

When I returned home from each trip, I transcribed the audiotapes and began my analysis of patterns in both language and learning. These were supplemented with email exchanges about developing plans as well as audiotapes and small transcripts that the teachers and artists would send me on sessions that had been conducted in my absence. With each subsequent trip, I conducted extensive interviews with teachers, artists, and children to member check my initial findings against their understandings. Thus the research includes my own transcripts and fieldnotes as well as summaries and transcripts from the participants themselves, which I analysed for the thematic patterns reported in this piece.



A key feature of my analysis for this particular research was attending to the changes in the adults' growing expertise—the new and varied professional opportunities in which they participated, their willingness to take risks even in the face of difficult circumstances, their expanding knowledge of how to engage children in fine literature, and the shift in their discourse as they became more articulate in the language of drama. As stated previously, the language and learning of the children in Linda and Lesley's classes have been well documented in earlier research (Wolf, 2006; 2008). Here, however, I will concentrate on the heightened sense of professional responsibility in Linda and Lesley, which led to the children's participation in the Ouseburn regeneration project that the teachers designed on their own. Indeed, this project represents the depth of the teachers' continually growing understanding of creative curricula. Thus, the research in this piece follows the arc of Creative Partnerships, as two teachers learned to take on the mantle of dramatic expertise in both literal and symbolic ways.

Theoretical Frame: The Mantle of the Expert

In the 1980s, Dorothy Heathcote created the ‘mantle-of-the-expert’ approach to education while working with master’s students at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne (Taylor, 2007).

Mantle of the Expert is a system that creates imaginary communities in the classroom. The learners are framed “as if” they are experts. Through their work they create an imaginary enterprise. The enterprise has a client that commissions them to work on a project. The project work creates opportunities to explore the curriculum creating meaningful, cross-curricular contexts for learning. (<http://www.mantleoftheexpert.com>)

One of Heathcote’s central arguments is that when children don the mantle of expertise they enter imagined worlds framed as if they were experts rather than in their typical stance as pupils. And as a result, the learning is more powerful. When children engage in activities in the ways monks from the Middle Ages, museum curators, or scientists in a laboratory would do, they assume not merely a fictional role but real responsibility.

Heathcote and Bolton (1995) explain:

Participants in mantle of the expert are *framed* as servicers committed to an enterprise. This frame fundamentally affects their relationship with knowledge. They can never be mere receivers “told” about knowledge. They can only engage with it as people with a *responsibility*. This responsibility is not to knowledge itself, although, paradoxically, that is what the students are indirectly acquiring, but to the enterprise they have undertaken. Knowledge becomes information, evidence, source material, specification, records, guidelines, regulations, theories, formulas, and artifacts, all of which are *to be interrogated*. This is an *active, urgent, purposeful* view of learning, in which knowledge is to be *operated on*, not merely taken in. (p. 32)

When framed as experts working within an enterprise, pupils are not simply left to their own devices. Teachers and other professionals work with them to nudge the work forward, provide resources, pose new problems, and question the efficacy of solutions. As Edmiston (2007) points out, “Learning and teaching through [mantle of the expert] is always socially supported. Children can always work with, or seek help from, other people who in the fictional context are people with relevant expertise” (p. 5).

This view of learning aligns well with theories of social constructivism with an emphasis on activity and social interaction. Here, the individual does not stand alone, but is instead a participant who is learning with others in communal goal-directed actions that lead to jointly agreed upon ideas or final products. Within this learning, Vygotsky (1978) suggests that language is key. No doubt, this is why the learning in mantle-of-the-expert inquiry is so powerful, for the “as if” world allows children to adopt the technical and specialist vocabulary of particular areas of expertise. Framed as architects they might speak of “elevations” and “blueprints,” and as playwrights they would discuss “scripts,” “staging,” and “scenes.” But even more powerful, the “as if” world is marked by sophisticated linguistic structures, especially hypothetical constructions as children consider what might happen within particular situations.

Teachers introducing the mantle-of-the-expert approach must use language that elevates children into these more sophisticated structures. Their language must initially refer to the hypothetical: “What if we...?” “Suppose we...” “I wonder if the client wants...” Heathcote and Bolton (1995) explain:

What such teacher talk is doing is slightly “raising the curtain,” inviting the class to take a peep at the metaphorical stage where fiction can take place. When the teacher says, “I reckon we could show them...,” who is we? Who is she addressing? She is obviously not talking as a teacher to a class; she is giving a hint of the roles they will all be playing when the curtain goes up completely. (p. 27)

As the fictional world becomes more tangible for the children, Towler-Evans (2007) suggests that two other factors impact the language. First, the teacher speaks in the moment. Rather than say “I imagine if the theatre company owner needs the script for that scene, he’ll have to drive over...,” a teacher entering into the drama would say, “Jez just called and he’s on his way over. What are we going to do about getting that scene finished on time?” Language in the now stresses the “active, urgent, purposeful view of learning” that is essential in Heathcote’s mantle-of-the-expert work.

The second factor is being able to separate stereotypical “teacher talk” from “colleague talk.” While a teacher might say, “Harry, you be the scribe while Caitlin and Emma dictate the end of that scene,” a colleague could say, “Jez said he wanted that scene to end with a bang, so I wonder how we could do it?” Teachers can direct children, but they can also use the voice of a colleague, and the use of the word “we” indicates that the tasks are to be shared as colleagues rather than simply assigned by the teacher.

These subtle but significant shifts in language are key to the two central roles that the teacher must play in mantle-of-the-expert inquiry: teacher-in-role and teacher out-of-role. Heathcote pioneered the strategy of “teacher-in-role”—the practice of teachers structuring from within the drama by participating in fictional encounters alongside their students. Johnson and O’Neill (1984) explained Heathcote’s position, “...the teacher, as the most mature member of the group, has not merely a right but a responsibility to intervene, since learning is the product of intervention” (p. 12).

Still, a teacher’s intervention and willingness to structure and play alongside the students does not diminish a teacher’s out-of-role capacities. The teacher chooses when to intervene and when to step aside, when to suggest, cajole, or challenge, when to direct and when to suggest. And as Heathcote explains, slipping in and out of role has much to do with the art of the teacher:

Teacher-in-role is a feature of much classroom drama, but a mantle of the expert approach demands a particularly mercurial version (!), with the teacher frequently engaged in hopping deftly, sliding elliptically, switching abruptly, or even bestriding the two worlds of fiction and reality. It may be just a matter of seconds that a role is held and then dropped—and then assumed again. It is even possible to convey with a word and the raising of an eyebrow a deliberate ambiguity between the two. It is also something of a paradox that the *in-role* usage breeds a healthy teacher/student relationship, whereas *out-of-role* talk and actions foreshadow the adventure and power of the drama. Both are essential. (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995, p. 30)

Heathcote’s focus on the ever-shifting roles of teachers in mantle-of-the-expert work is all in the service of students. Setting up an enterprise with its imaginary client ups the ante on children’s engagement. In essence, they commit not only to solving a particular problem, but they also dedicate themselves to working cooperatively, taking on responsibility, and meeting high standards.

Although the teacher is often the designer of the enterprise, s/he is not the evaluator. That role falls to the “‘presently absent’ client” who will be the final judge of the finished work. Instead, the teacher serves as a “‘channeler’—to the client or to other workers and always back to the students, *for it is their work, not the teacher’s*” (p. 172). Thus, mantle of the expert creates powerful learning opportunities for students. Although mantle projects exist in an “as if” world, the commitment, collaboration, responsibility, and high standards are real.

Yet, in telling this research story, I want to take the theoretical frame of mantle-of-the-expert inquiry and apply it to two teachers and two artists who took on the very real enterprise of Creative Partnerships with its complex, ever shifting, and highly demanding clientele. The teachers, in particular, are the main protagonists of this story, for they were asked to become “drama experts,” a label for which they were initially unprepared. Of course, slapping on a label does little to ensure real expertise. In thinking about children in mantle-of-the-expert endeavors, Towler-Evans (2007) explains:

Being [framed as] experts gives the children a sense of status and also a sense of responsibility. But it is not enough to give the students the label expert; they have to “grow” into the role, through the tasks they undertake. The children build a stake in the enterprise, and gradually a sense of caring emerges: for quality and standards; for the imagined clients; for the people and problems they encounter. (p. 61)

Just as children have to grow into their roles, the teachers had to grow into their own roles as drama experts. During the four years of the study they went well beyond the label as they learned to build a stake in the Creative Partnerships enterprise. Their caring and commitment for quality and standards was initially centred on their students—and over the years this focus was only heightened. Yet, as they encountered an ever-widening circle of people and problems—for each Creative Partnerships project brought its own individuals and issues—their caring and commitment moved beyond their own children and classroom concerns. In essence, they expanded their concern to children and curricula in other settings by working towards the professional development of teachers who, like them, initially felt incapable of taking on the mantle of dramatic expertise.

Year One: From “Not Us!” to “A Way of Working”

In the first year of this four-year study, the teachers of Bexhill Primary School—just beginning their Creative Partnerships with dramatic artists—stayed well away from claiming any expertise in drama. Linda Nesbitt, a Year Two teacher, emphatically stated, “We aren’t drama experts at all!” Her teaching colleague, Lesley Watson, concurred. She initially found the experience of working with CP artists “right intimidating!” Both teachers willingly stepped aside when artists came to the school to work with their children, for they felt that the artists held the expertise in drama and could literally and metaphorically run the show.

However, this was soon to change. As the teachers watched multiple artists at work, they came to realise that some were relatively ineffective with children, while others were much more successful. As a result, the teachers became increasingly discerning in whom they placed their trust and, more importantly, they began to work alongside the artists rather than sit on the sidelines as audience members and watch. In addition, as they began to try on more dramatic techniques in their own classrooms as well as in the Drama Club they organised, their confidence rose. Drama became not simply an add on to their curriculum, but “a way of working.”

While much of their progress in this first year has been documented (Heath & Wolf, 2005), particularly their growth in dramatic expertise, there is more to be said about how this developed. Much of the shift was tied up in a rather one-sided view of expertise. A very popular Arts Council book at the time, *Drama in Schools* (Ashwell & Gouge, 2003), highlighted the numerous potential contributions of theatre artists to schools, while downplaying teachers’ contributions. And the general goals of Creative Partnerships seemed to send a similar message. Remember that the second of the four goals on the CP website highlights developing “the skills of teachers and their ability to work with creative practitioners.” But there is no goal that discusses the complementary learning of artists. True, the fourth goal emphasises developing “the creative industries,” but the learning and life-changing possibilities for creative practitioners growing in their ability to work *with* teachers and children is not even mentioned.

This unidirectional view of learning seemed to pervade the teachers’ interactions with artists in the first year of the study, and the opportunities for meeting with creative practitioners under the CP auspices seemed to compound rather than relieve the problem. For example, quite early in their work with CP, the Bexhill teachers were invited to meet a number of creative practitioners who were striving hard to demonstrate their artistic knowledge. Not really sure of what they were looking for, the teachers left the event feeling confused and upset. Linda explained: “All these creative people! [Pause]... We felt intimidated by them because they were talking at the top, because they wanted to show themselves in the best creative and artistic light.” Lesley added, “And we were embarrassed.” While this was certainly not CP’s intention, the teachers felt their expertise about children and curricula carried little weight.

As a classroom teacher myself for many years and now a professor working with preservice and inservice teachers, I found the diminishment of teacher expertise an ineffective choice, and in my conversations with the Teacher Research Team (TRT), I told them as much. I encouraged them to be more proactive in their choices of artists—looking for artists who were not only skilled in their trade, but who were willing to keep the teachers’ goals for their children in mind.

The teachers agreed, but one of their first attempts to work with an artist in a more collaborative way backfired. Linda, Lesley, and their Head Teacher Joy Lowther met with a theatre company owner who seemed in deep agreement with their pedagogical stance, but when her artist employee came in to do the work, he virtually ignored all their planning and refused to adapt to their children’s needs. Joy expressed their frustration saying, “We were quite firm and pinned them down to particular things. And we had success criteria and all of this written down, but at the end of the day they had a package that they actually wanted to do and that was it. It didn’t actually bear much relationship to anything we discussed.”

In this conversation, I suggested that they continue to look for artists that had “more mental flexibility.” Another member of the TRT had had much more success working with Cap-a-Pie and her Year Five students. She explained that after the first day of their work with her kids, she felt the topic of the play was “turning very, very negative,” but after she talked to the artists, “they changed it.” The catastrophic end result of working with the one theatre company contrasted with the more open and flexible stance of the Cap-a-Pie artists, and seemed to inspire the teachers to redouble their efforts to work with artists who were truly willing to collaborate. In an interview with Linda four years later, she reflected on this turn of events:

Linda: I would always shy clear of putting myself in the position where I had to even meet creative people. I thought, “I’ve got nothing in common with them.”

Shelby: Well, and you’ve also had some experiences that actually confirmed that.

Linda: Yes, and I was also very intimidated by them. Now I realise they aren't perfect. You know how you say that people who profess to be good are good, because I wouldn't know the difference. Now, because of the experiences I've had I can look and I can value what they're good at. But I can see also how they communicate. I now realise that being fantastic at something is one thing, but the value is having some sort of skill and being able to communicate it. Now we are more discerning in how we pick our partners—far more discerning, because we've got an idea of what we're looking for.

The intriguing thing about this conversation is Linda's characterisation of creative people. Clearly, she felt that she was initially uncreative and that creativity belonged to a particular group of artists who, because of their professions in theatre or the visual arts, dominated the domain. She separated herself from such people by emphasising that she initially had “nothing in common with them.”

But the light came on when she recognised that the “value” lay not only in their skill, but also in their ability to *communicate their creativity*. And as with everything Linda said and felt, the ability to communicate meant communication with children. When artists came in, no matter how talented they might be, if they failed to communicate well with children or disregarded the school's particular needs, the experience was less than stellar. She and Lesley set high goals for their interactions with children, and if the artists weren't willing to engage in such a process, then they could pack up their gimmicks and set packages and hit the road.

Because the teachers selected drama in order to heighten their children's speaking and listening opportunities, our conversations often centered on how this would play out in the children's language and learning. What kinds of things would the children say? What would change in their ability to communicate a character through gesture? How, in essence, would we know that the children were learning through drama? The Teacher Research Team challenged me to develop a framework that would highlight key aspects of drama in education at Bexhill. Based on our combined observations and my audio-recordings of the children, we co-constructed a chart entitled “The Language of Drama at Bexhill.” In creating the categories we placed “The Language of Literacy” in the centre, and book-ended it with the four other key categories of growth: the Languages of Commitment, Collaboration, Character, and Critique.

The details of the chart are less important here than the multiple conversations about literacy and language that the TRT and I shared. For example, one of the subcategories in the Language of Literacy column resulted from an observation I conducted in Linda’s class, as she helped her Year Two children tackle increasingly difficult text passages. Linda recognised the critical differences between basic comprehension and more complex inferencing, and she saw that some children in her class were able to cross this bridge while others still struggled. She also realised her own role in nudging her children to consider the text more deeply. As a result, we added the subcategory “Understanding the more subtle aspects of text in terms of comprehension and inferencing.” Conversations about the framework in general and the subcategories in particular helped to clarify the criteria the teachers hoped professional artists would meet when they came to work at Bexhill.

Linda and Lesley found true support for this work when Creative Partnerships helped to sponsor a young dramatist, Bethany, to help them with their drama club. Bethany was a listener, eager to work with Linda and Lesley and learn from them as well. Rather than a unidirectional view of the flow of learning from artist to teachers, her presence represented a collaboration among the adults. Linda explained:

She gave us activities and ideas that I’m sure are pretty basic, and anybody who is involved with drama would know them, but we didn’t know them! What was good was that she wasn’t threatening to us because we aren’t drama experts at all. And in the past at university, I’ve always felt very nervous with these kinds of things. But I felt confident and happy with her. And Lesley said exactly the same. We could work with her.



You know if she were taking credit and saying, “Here I am! I’m your drama expert. And this is what we’re going to do,” that would be hard. Instead, she works *alongside*.

I think this has been a *partnership* because we were able to help her become more confident with the age of the children. I think this was why it was gratifying as well because you knew it was a two-way street. She was really receptive because she would ask us at the end how did we think it went. And she was *concerned* to hear our opinion. She wanted to know. She was evaluating her own work, but asking us our opinion.

Linda’s comments show the critical need for respect among Creative Partnerships’ colleagues. When certain theatrical artists came in and engaged in pseudo-planning with the teachers—planning that they would later ignore—the end result was not only less effective for the Bexhill children, but also less successful in helping the teachers take drama on board. Because of Bethany’s open concern for Linda and Lesley’s opinions and because of her respect for their extensive knowledge about young children, the exchange of expertise became a “gratifying... two-way street.” Rather than feel “nervous,” Linda and Lesley felt “confident and happy” with the partnership, and the end result was heightened learning for all.

Building relationships based on respect is not an easy thing to do. My own relationship was initially a bit touch and go, because the teachers understandably questioned my purposes. Why was I *really* there? Why was it necessary for me to audio-record everything and take constant notes on my computer while observing in their classrooms? Essentially, what did I want from them in the conduct of my research? In the fourth year of the project, a researcher from another university came to interview Linda and Lesley about their experience with Creative Partnerships and working with a researcher for such a long period of time. Linda responded:

Linda: We danced around each other for quite a while. [Laughs] We weren’t drama specialists. We hadn’t had any experience. So then all of a sudden this strange American woman arrived—

Chorus: [Laughter]

Linda: And then we weren’t altogether sure what she wanted from us. And then you’re always too polite to get down to the nitty gritty and say, “Well, you know, what’s the deal here?”

Over the course of the first year, the teachers and I were able to come to a shared understanding that “the deal” centred on the language and learning of children. Linda and Lesley put the learning of their children first and foremost, and when they came to understand that I shared their view, I became less of an intrusive and “strange American woman” and more of a colleague with whom they could share their ideas.

We also had a meeting of the minds about literature, because Linda and Lesley as well as other members of the TRT had a deep appreciation of fine books. Indeed, many of our conversations swirled around children’s literature, which they could ultimately use with their children in innovative dramatic activities. The teachers were fascinated with much of the literature we discussed, and over the course of our conversations I provided a mini-course on formal aspects of literature (character, setting, style, etc.) as well as a number of techniques for elevating children’s engagement with books. Yet, rather than a lecture format, our conversations were informal and collegial, with contributions all around. The teachers began to think about books in different ways. Picturebooks were not simply potential read alouds nor designated only for the very young; instead, they considered what curricula they could create when using particular books across the grade levels. The teachers also realised that rather than adding on more work to their already packed days, the techniques could easily slip into existing routines. Linda suggested:

A lot of it is refreshing our memories because you study this at university and then you come into a school and you strain to fit into a path that fits. And this reminds you. The ideas are really handy because they’re all practical, and you can see how they can all fit into our structure. Everything else has got to fit into what is already there. But Shelby, you’ve shown us ways that it can.

At this first-year juncture the teachers had agreed to take on a number of new strategies, hooking them to their current practice. Once they realised that drama did not always have to mean a big production, but could be used in smaller, interstitial spaces in their curriculum, they willingly incorporated more techniques—like hot seating—into their day-to-day planning. And once reminded of time-honoured literary strategies, such as character analysis, discussion of theme, or the close observation of illustrative techniques, they began to slip these into their explorations of literature as well.

One TRT member, for example, read her Year Five students the Grimm Brothers' (1981) *Hansel and Gretel*. But rather than leave it at that, she and her children discussed the eerie similarities between the stepmother and the witch that are evident in Anthony Browne's illustrations, and they ultimately created dramatic scenarios in which they put the stepmother on trial! The process of thinking about what a teacher could do with a book besides read it, was something that intrigued Linda and Lesley. Both were fascinated by picturebooks, encouraging their children to analyse the illustrations in more depth. Lesley, for example, introduced *Winnie in Winter* (Paul & Thomas, 1997), but rather than read the story she and her children explored the hilarious illustrations by Korky Paul to write their own stories. As Lesley reiterated to her children, "We looked at the book and we decided not to read the words, didn't we? We decided we would write the story by looking at the pictures, because the pictures are so fantastic!"

At the end of Year One, the teachers saw drama as "a way of working" and their use of literary texts was more inventive, but keep Linda's earlier comment in mind, particularly its points about "you can see how [these strategies] can all fit into our structure" and "everything else has got to fit into what is already there." While the Bexhill teachers were definitely incorporating new and innovative strategies into their practice, their work did not yet include the deeply transformative vision of Creative Partnerships "to foster creativity in schools with a view to creating *long-term structural change*" (Parker, 2007, p.1). Still, so early in the project this should come as no surprise, and as we enter into the second year, we will see even more progress toward true structural change.

Year Two: Pirates, Playwrights, & Collaborative Planning

In the study's second year, Bethany was no longer available to work with Linda and Lesley, and they began to look for new theatrical partners for their work. Because of the success of the Cap-a-Pie artists—not only in their theatrical skills, but also in their willingness to work with teachers—they soon emerged as the top choice. Still, Linda and Lesley hesitated, because Gordon and Mark had very little experience with working with young children. They suggested that the actors “audition” with their children in three sessions. If, at the end of the sessions, the actors had shown their skill with the six and seven-year-olds in Linda's Year Two class as well as shown their continued commitment to collaborative planning and reflection with the teachers, they would be hired to do a larger project.

The focus on time for planning was something that I suggested, and we were able to convince the Head Teacher of Bexhill, Joy Lowther, that time out of the class for Linda and Lesley would ultimately benefit their children. In addition, Lorna Fulton—then director of Creative Partnerships Durham Sunderland—agreed to finance this co-planning not only for Gordon and Mark's time, but also for Linda and Lesley's cover. This may seem an unusual expenditure in both time and money when the focus of the CP work is to provide creative opportunities for children, but in terms of another CP goal of “value for money,” it was essential. In short, the adults' time for planning and reflection ultimately made for better practice with children.

It also made for a better relationship among the adults. Because they had time to ruminate over ideas, offer contrasting suggestions, critique and consider, they had long stretches of time to get to know and respect each other's ideas. In our final interview, Lesley reflected on my insistence on this process: “Your advice right at the beginning was about having time for planning: ‘You must have that time for planning.’ And to us, at that point in time to have these half days of talking it was like, *‘For me!?!’* We'd never had that time before. But I think that was so crucial to the success of that project and the success of that relationship.”

Still, the relationship didn't happen instantly, and in the first meeting when all the adults involved were present, the conversation was more awkward. Gordon and Mark had a specific idea they wanted to pursue with the children writing short scenes that stemmed from their lives in the community, and Linda, Lesley, and Joy worried about the sensitive nature of such scenes. Gordon argued that the parents

might be positive about the opportunity to discuss serious community issues with their children, for that's exactly what he did with his own children. But based on their experience with Bexhill parents, Linda, Lesley, and Joy disagreed:

Linda: You may speak openly with *your* children, but you discuss things with them. You'll debate with them.

Lesley: It won't be a two-minute yes/no thing.

Linda: They see that their parents speak in a certain way, behave in a certain way. But then they've got to figure it out for themselves. Their parents don't justify or clarify what's going on. The children have then got to take the information and internalise it and try to make some sense out of it.

Joy: The children of Bexhill live in a dual system. They have their home system and they have the school system, and by the time they get to about Year Two they understand there's a difference.

The focus of Gordon's mainstream parenting orientation was nothing new to Linda and Lesley. In fact, they shared it, and they had raised their own children discussing issues, weighing the consequences of decisions, and often broaching sensitive topics. They used many of these techniques in their classrooms, for they were genuinely interested in extending their children's language through opportunities for substantive discussion. But as teachers, there were topics that were not open for whole class discussion. Issues of alcoholism or physical abuse, for example, were more privately discussed with the Head Teacher as well as specialist child advocates.

Certainly not every Bexhill family had such troubling issues, yet most children were not raised in the swirl of language that characterises mainstream families (Heath, 1982; 1983). Surrounded by a housing estate, the school community is characterised by what Head Teacher Joy Lowther describes as "high levels of unemployment, a range of family contexts, and little cultural diversity," for 99% of the children are of western European descent. With the loss of the shipping and coal industries during the Thatcher years, Bexhill's children come from families that are generationally poor, with many members of the community receiving public assistance.

Thus the actors were initially unaware of the “dual system” of language, which the teachers and their children contended with on a day-to-day basis. While Mark and Gordon had a sound understanding of troubled youth from deprived areas, for they had worked with excluded teens for years, the issues of early language were quite new to them. And of course, they were still operating from a position of what would make intriguing theatre, rather than from the children’s or school’s perspective of child protection issues. It wasn’t that they were willing to “exploit” children, for as the conversation emerged, Gordon emphatically stated, “That’s wrong!” But they had much to learn about the lack of opportunities for deep discussion about difficult issues in the children’s lives at home.

Another point of contention was Mark and Gordon’s surprise that they would have to audition with Linda’s children and the teachers, as they had never had to prove themselves in this way before. Schools either hired them or they didn’t, but they didn’t test them over a period of time. They also felt they had already proved the success of their work with the Year Five Bexhill children, but Linda and Lesley felt strongly that working with very young children presented quite different challenges. As Joy pointed out, “We need to see you physically with the kids, because we would never want to work with someone we didn’t know or the children didn’t feel positive about.” This represented quite a shift in practice from the first year of the study, when Bexhill hosted a line up of different companies to work with their children.

These two points of debate—the language of young children and the auditioning of actors—showed Linda, Lesley, and Joy’s willingness to hold firm to their beliefs, particularly about the best interests of their children. It also showed the teachers’ professionalism in terms of their own development, because if the audition went well, they were willing to commit to a long-term project that would demand much in terms of their own time. But the time commitment was less important than their own growth as professionals, and indeed this was true for all the adults. Mark and Gordon not only agreed to the audition, but once they had passed muster and were hired, they too signed on for a project that would expand their own professional understandings of working not only with young children, but also with experienced teachers.

At the end of the second year, Mark and Gordon had much to say about the collaboration:

Mark: Linda and Lesley have been really strong. I think we were clear from the start that we were working with two people who would collaborate with us, who would really tell us when things weren't working and tell us when things were going really well, and that's been a novelty for me. It's the first time I've worked that closely with a teacher. Most of the time, the teachers go, "Come in, do your thing, and get on with it." But from day one, Linda and Lesley have been with us.

Gordon: And we *planned* for that as well. In fact, there's been a lot of good, good time for planning.

Mark: But that's what I'm saying about their role, because they've been more forthcoming in that planning. They've not been saying, "Well, tell me what you want to do." And "That sounds good." They've actually come to us with ideas. It really has been a collaboration with us all working together.

The actors' emphasis on collaborative planning and their positive reception of Linda and Lesley's ideas stood in stark contrast with their earlier experience with teachers who were content for the actors to "do your thing, and get on with it."

Still, it was not necessarily an easy process. Indeed, their partnership over that year took many twists and turns, and the tension between creating a piece of sound theatre and meeting the needs of children remained a key point of contention, which has been extensively documented in *A Playwright's Life For Me! Young Children's Language and Learning Through Drama* (Wolf, 2006). However, the tension only served to guarantee the quality of the work. Quite early in their sessions with the children, Mark and Gordon realised that a set of scenes on community issues for an audience of adults did not interest the children. And over the months of audition and the following project work, they took the children's lead.



They transformed their initial ideas into a pirate play, filled with slapstick humour, for an audience of children. Even more importantly, with the teachers' insistence that their children be involved in every part of the process, the actors agreed for the children to have a strong voice in scripting the play. Of course, being six and seven-years-of-age, they didn't actually *write* what would ultimately turn out to be an hour-long play. But they vocalised their ideas for dialogue and plot points, and the actors performed their ideas on the spot to give the children a chance to weigh the efficacy of their choices. Once they'd decided on dialogue or the direction of a scene, the teachers, actors, and their stage manager scribed the children's language directly into a script, which the Cap-a-Pie actors ultimately performed at their theatre, The Store.

Relatively early in the project process, a visit by ministers became a tipping point toward the teachers and actors' articulation of their changing professional stance as well as an opportunity to showcase the Bexhill children's growth in language. From the outset, it was a rather extraordinary meeting. Hosted by Lorna Fulton (Director of Creative Partnerships Durham Sunderland), the list of guests included Paul Collard (National Director of Creative Partnerships), Sir David Normington, KCB (then Permanent Secretary at the Department for Education and Skills), Sue Street (Permanent Secretary of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport), and Patrick Chapman (Director for Children in Government Office for the North East).

Although the meeting was ostensibly designed to have the ministers visit Linda and Lesley's classes and then have a follow-up talk among adults, the teachers understandably felt quite intimidated by the prospect. They also felt that seeing the work in their own classes would not accurately represent the work they'd all been doing on the pirate play with Gordon and Mark—which was the focus of their Creative Partnerships project. As these meetings are wont to do, the school received relatively short notice for the visit and the actors had none but the day before. Mark had other obligations and Gordon initially resisted because of his own cramped schedule, but after the teachers and I spoke to Gordon about the critical importance of his presence, he agreed. The ministers thus witnessed a typical session with the children as they worked on a scene from their pirate play with Gordon and a musician who was part of the Cap-a-Pie company.

As a result, the ministers also witnessed the high engagement of the children in the process, as they offered dialogue suggestions, built on one another's ideas, used high-level vocabulary, and sorted out plot difficulties. Their language showcased all the sophisticated language structures that had marked their ongoing participation in the project: "You could say...", "What if...", and "Try it this way because..." The children easily entered into the hypothetical world of problem posing and problem solving. In addition, the ministers saw all the adults working to stretch the children's language even further as they pushed for clarification, challenged suggestions, and rearticulated children's ideas to keep the gist but make sure everyone understood: "Do you mean...?" and "I'm not sure that would work, because..."

Intriguingly, after the session was over and we all met in the staffroom to debrief the event, the adults' language was stretched as well. For the typical teacher or actor, answering tough questions from high-level members of government about the efficacy of such work and the funding necessary to support it, might be best avoided. But Linda, Lesley, and Gordon rose to the challenge. Gordon explained how their process in this case was new. Rather than have the children act, they were playwrights as the actors served as puppets to the children's suggestions:

We have done a lot of work with younger children where we've asked them to participate, but this is a new way of working for us. I don't think many people work in this way. But we also have a long-term aim in this project, which is to produce a piece of theatre that they will themselves have written for other children of their age. This is again something that people rarely do. They work by themselves. They work with other adults. But this is basically starting with the children's own ideas and refining them.

Linda and Lesley also talked about their new ways of working, both in the classroom and in the Drama Club they created and ran once a week for the Year Two children. But as they discussed the children's high attendance and active participation in their club, Sue Street, then Permanent Secretary of DCMS, asked for the bottom line:

Sue: A tough question for me perhaps is that my department has put over 30 million pounds into Creative Partnerships, so how much do you need that? I mean, why not run a Drama Club anyway?

Lesley: Because we didn't know how, and we had to learn how to do it.

Sue: But schools have been putting on school plays forever.

Linda: And we have as well. I'll tell you what the difference is. In the past, and hand on heart, we handled a lot of productions. But they were directed by adults all the time. *We chose*. The best readers were always narrators, the loudest voices were speakers. It's always been a set thing with the adults in charge. Now, because we are confident with drama and we've got more skills, the children make a lot of decisions themselves.

Sue: And you've received that from Creative Partnerships?

Linda: Well, I think being given the opportunity to work with professionals has made a difference, and I think our children are even more committed to drama because they're negotiating now. They can agree or disagree with each other and sort out the issues without me coming in to make the decision.

What's striking about both Gordon and the teachers' remarks is their shared commitment to children's voices. For Gordon, it was a totally new experience. Just as the children were volunteering ideas for the actors to refine, Cap-a-Pie was learning to refine its own practice based on input from children. As a result, they were learning to broaden their repertoire, expanding from their earlier work with disenfranchised adolescents or their "Play in a Week" productions with older primary children.

Linda and Lesley had been instrumental in this shift, encouraging Gordon and Mark to avoid gravitating toward the more talented of their children and demonstrating decisions that would place the more vocal children together in small group work, thus giving shyer children a chance to express their ideas. Calling the actors' attention to these problems and potential solutions no doubt enabled them to see their own tendency to do quite similar things in play productions, such as giving major roles to those who already had the reading ability or the confidence to do the job. The high pressures of these school-wide performances made their practices stand at odds with their typical classroom practice and gave the teachers pause. Thus, through these realisations and new-found ways of working, all of the adults came to believe that a substantial part of their own growing efficacy with working with children meant giving children more say in the process.

This also played out in Lesley's Community of Enquiry sessions. In addition to the time off for planning with the actors, Lesley had been given additional release time from her Reception class to work with Linda's children—reading them a story and then asking the children to generate questions for story discussion. Over the course of the pirate work, she conducted four sessions to gather data on the children's growth in question formulation and story discussion. In her comments to the Ministers, Lesley explained:

As part of a previous course I did on thinking skills, I've started to use the "Community of Enquiry" to encourage children to ask questions rather than just giving the answer. I'm looking at their questioning skills, trying to get them to move beyond just asking closed questions all the time and open up ideas and look deeper. And also debating particular questions to see what the answer might be rather than "Well, the answer is such and such." Instead, the focus is on "What do you think?" They're debating backwards and forwards and disagreeing and agreeing and backing up their arguments. And I've been transcribing everything they say and analysing how their language has changed from closed questions to more open questions, using more connectives in their answers, and connecting each of those answers and adding on. So it's all building up in quite a short space of time.

Lesley had long been involved in "Community of Enquiry" ideas, but other than her discussions with Linda and me, she had often felt isolated in her conviction that this was a critical curricular concept. But here, with the help of CP as well as her Head Teacher, she was given the time and opportunity to practice and refine her own skills in the process.

What was also building up in a short space of time was her attention to planning. Transcribing and analysing these conversations meant considerable effort. She also sent the transcripts to me and we discussed them over email and during my visits. And since all our emails went to Linda as well, it provided more opportunity for the three of us to discuss children's language and learning, particularly with fine literature, which Lesley folded back into planning her next session.

In addition, these discussions inspired us to ask Lorna Fulton for a book stipend that they could spend to expand their classroom libraries for children, which she granted. The key argument we used was that for children to really engage in literature, they have to have something to engage in—an intriguing plot, captivating characters, inspiring illustrations, and themes thick enough to discuss, debate, and dramatise. We needed books that would push children’s thinking and consequently open up even more space for children’s language.

From all sides Linda’s children were getting this push, whether creating their pirate play or discussing a piece of literature. And it’s intriguing that at the close of the ministers’ meeting, Paul Collard, Director of Creative Partnerships, noticed not only the nudge from the adults, but the push from the children themselves. Relatively new to his job at the time, he explained:

I’m not in schools all that often watching kids, but it seemed to me that those kids were really pushing themselves. And it seemed to me that that isn’t normal. One was the pushing. Secondly, they concentrated for a very long time. And absolutely they were great. They were on the edge of their seat. And they were prepared to go back over the scene again and again. And that struck me as very unusual for a group of that age.

Indeed. The children were deeply committed to the process because they had a voice in the very real negotiations of how the play would go. As in mantle-of-the-expert inquiry, they were engaged in an enterprise and had an envisioned clientele—real children who would ultimately be their audience members—and they knew, more than the adults, what would please their audience. Their strong attention was thus linked to the responsibilities they felt for the play, their future audience, and their own sense of taking on the mantle of playwriting expertise.

Interestingly, Paul’s opening comment could be applied to the teachers and actors as well, for they too were pushing themselves. They had entered into deep collaboration with adults outside of their usual groups—teachers with teachers and actors with actors. By now they were quite used to sharing their ideas with each other as well as with me, and they were even ready to communicate with a high-powered group of ministers. They had taken on the responsibility of a huge production that would meet all the criteria for an exciting piece of professional theatre. Most importantly, they had committed themselves to a very real and present clientele of children whose voices they wanted to honour. In comparison with Year One, they had gone much further along the path to transformative practice.

Year Three: Expanding Professional Expertise

Paul Collard's impressions of the day as well as the extensions one could make to the teachers and artists' own push in their transformational journeys were to prove prophetic in the study's third year. Up until this point, the teachers and artists had been focused on their own practices as well as the benefit to be gained from their continued collaboration. But at the very end of the second year and just days before the performance of the pirate play, yet another event foreshadowed a shift in their expanding professional expertise. The booklets on *Dramatic Learning in the Primary School* (Heath & Wolf, 2005) were launched at a Creative Partnerships conference on "Coordinating Creative Learning 05" held at the University of Warwick.

CP invited Linda, Lesley, and me to give a workshop on effective collaborations on the first day of the conference, and asked me to present the booklets in a research talk on the second day. According to our invitation, the approximately 250 participants were made up of school coordinators, creative practitioners, CP staff from local areas and some Arts Council of England Officers. Each conference participant was given a set of booklets among other publications.

Because it was Linda and Lesley's first conference presentation, I prepared a handout for our participants as well as general guidelines for how our one-hour workshop would go, and the teachers seemed grateful to let me take the lead. Still, once our small group of participants began asking questions about "What makes an effective creative partnership?" Linda and Lesley took over. While they had been nervous prior to the opening of the workshop, they soon shifted to a comfortable and articulate explanation of their work with CP over the last two years, stressing the absolute need for true collaboration among partners. They discussed their successful collaborations with Bethany as well as with Cap-a-Pie, and they described the growth in their children's language learning as well.

That night at dinner and throughout the next day of presentations, participants approached Linda and Lesley to discuss their work with CP. My own presentation on the booklets was followed by Paul Collard's keynote, which concentrated on the accomplishments of CP in general. But one of the more specific examples he gave concerned his day at Bexhill, and he elaborated on his excitement with the children's progress as well as that of the professional partnership among the adults. Thus the work at Bexhill with Theatre Cap-a-Pie became a strong focus on the second day and more and more participants were eager to talk with the teachers. Two years earlier, the teachers had gone to a CP event and felt upset and intimidated as participants. Now they were presenters, determined to help any interested participants feel comfortable with breaking their traditional routines and adding drama to their practice.

Lesley said that her "initial feelings about going were, 'What do we know? Why would people want to listen to us? Everyone knows more than we do! Will people think we're trying to tell them how to do their jobs?' But then we thought, 'Never mind. Shelby knows what she's talking about. We'll just follow her lead.'" But these feelings of insecurity died away as more and more participants came up with genuine questions. Lesley explained, "Once we got there, we got carried away with the enthusiasm of wanting to spread the word and the desire to encourage others to be brave and give it a go, break their routine. And once we talked to the other teachers and they had the same frustrations and fears and desires and hopes as we did, I felt 'Yes I want to encourage them and support them the way Shelby did for us.'"

While the teachers initially felt they needed to follow my lead, it soon became clear that more people wanted to talk to them than to me. Linda and Lesley had first-hand knowledge of the project from start to finish, while I was a more distanced observer. They had taken on the risk of changing their practice and collaborating with outsiders, all in the service of a more creative curriculum for their children. They had experienced the "same frustrations and fears and desires and hopes" that many participants felt about their own creative partnerships. And they knew that teachers on this emotional journey needed support.

The transition from following my lead to taking the lead in their own initiatives marked another critical juncture in Linda and Lesley's professional development, especially when it came to their use of children's literature. Throughout the fall we continued to discuss fine literature as well as potential ways of sharing books with children. With CP funding, Linda and Lesley bought many classic picturebooks on my recommendation, but they also spent hours in Waterstone's finding their own treasures, which they then shared with me. In addition, Lesley discovered the Seven Stories museum, and she and Linda began to attend lectures and visit their bookshop as well. Lesley wrote an enthusiastic email about their first visit:

Linda and I had a great day a week past Friday. We went to Seven Stories, which was lovely and reinforced our own ideas about engaging children in good literature. It has a beautiful bookshop, but several other floors had the facilities to let children immerse themselves in text. They had dressing up activities within common settings—a forest, a dragon's den, etc. One section had books and window seats, and the children were encouraged to read or be read to and then add their comments to a "review" wall.

The attic was the best. We sat in on another school's session, led by Seven Stories staff, in the lovely setting (wood beamed ceiling and a curved seating area). The children were given bags belonging to story characters, containing objects and quotes, and they had to build up an investigation about the character as well as descriptive webs of words about the clues. A lot of what they were doing was similar to the techniques we have been trying in the class since the influence of Mark and Gordon, so Linda and I came out feeling very enthusiastic and fired up!

When I came in December, the three of us spent an entire day visiting Seven Stories, and Lesley arranged for us to meet with the Collection Development Director, Elizabeth Hammill, in a meeting that was to prove helpful in my own professional growth, for Elizabeth later became a chapter author in a handbook I am editing with colleagues (Wolf, Coats, Enciso, & Jenkins, in preparation). Thus the professional exchange I shared with the teachers was less a case of me leading them, than all of us supporting and learning from each other.



Still, the opening up of the teachers' professional prospects also had its downside. Opportunities for teachers to go out in the world—spending a day at a museum designed to promote children's engagement in literature, for example—are extremely rare. And on their return to Bexhill, they often faced the reality of school record keeping, test preparation, and more traditional expectations for literacy lessons. Lesley wrote me: "Sometimes I think you've opened Pandora's box in 'educating' Linda and me. We get frustrated with the school system and restrictions now that we've experienced how it can be, and it can be a bit worrying to look into the future, when you're no longer our 'champion' and see how things might slip back to the drudgery of Literacy Hour, without the element of freedom we are given now because of you."

The freedom, however, came from a trio of supporters rather than me alone. Lorna Fulton, director of CP Durham Sunderland, not only provided the financial support for the books and the teachers' professional opportunities, but she increasingly counted on Linda and Lesley to share their experiences with others in a variety of venues, which I'll recount in more detail later in this piece. The teachers also received extensive support from their Head Teacher, Joy Lowther. She was particularly instrumental in placing both Linda and Lesley in Year Two positions in the study's third year, which heightened their ability to plan together as well as think about revamping the curriculum to open the door to more creative thinking. Lesley explained:

I was in Reception and Linda was in Year Two, but the year after *Mary Lou* [the pirate play], we were put into Year Two together specifically to look at the Year Two curriculum as an initial start for the whole school and look for creative opportunities and really given a free hand, which was very brave of Joy to give us that. [Joy said], “Do whatever you think you can do to bring lots of creative skills into the children’s lives.” ... So we completely changed the Year Two curriculum with cross-curricular links and loads of different types of drama techniques.

Teaming the two teachers as well as providing the kind of intellectual freedom they craved, was a tremendous support as they worked to widen their creative curriculum. Across England there is a push for creative curricular reform, but there’s also the ironic pull of standardised testing, which makes such a decision “brave” indeed, especially since Year Two children take the SATS.

The cross-curricular links Lesley spoke of were largely centred on combining literature, drama, and opportunities for young children’s writing. In the third year of the study, both Linda and Lesley had classes with low academic skills. As Linda explained: “My class made the least progress of any class in the school last year, and Lesley’s class had had a bad Year One because of a series of substitutes. So they came into Year Two with a really negative attitude toward writing, and they wouldn’t pick a pencil up.” Still, the teachers’ ambitions for these six-year-old children were high, for they not only wanted to expand their children’s oral language but their written language as well.

In November, the teachers developed a month-long unit using *The Polar Express* (Van Allsburg, 1985)—a classic story of a boy who travels to the North Pole to receive the first gift of Christmas from Santa. Instead of simply reading the picturebook to the class, they revealed the illustrations in increments. Captivated by the art, the children began discussing potential stories behind the pictures. Linda and Lesley followed the children’s lead in dramatic ways; they turned their classrooms into trains and the children did extensive role-playing as passengers and conductors and wrote play scripts for their characters. They were so excited about their group script writing, that they asked their teachers if they could craft individual scripts so they could each experiment with dialogue. Over the course of the unit, the children learned about a variety of written genres—film reviews, speech bubbles, play scripts, and letters to Santa.

Flush with the success of this work, the teachers met with Theatre Cap-a-Pie's Gordon and Mark in December of the year to plan for an upcoming workshop in January. They brought several Van Allsburg texts with them as well as a number of other picturebooks that the artists might consider in developing the next stage of their work together. Unfamiliar with current children's book illustration, the artists were astonished with the evocative nature of the texts, but they were particularly intrigued with Van Allsburg's (1984) *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*, poring over the illustrations, reading and rereading the frame story with growing excitement. They also wanted to experiment with a curriculum that was out of their purview; and they asked Linda and Lesley for their support. Mark asked: "Is it possible for us to do things outside drama as well? I mean, this idea of writing and this idea of storytelling, rather than for it all to be physical: 'Get up on your feet. We're going to be actors!' Instead, we could use that as a starting point for creative writing and develop one of these images for a scene."

This work has been documented in *The Mysteries of Creative Partnerships* (Wolf, 2008). The central argument in this piece is that successful teaching often occurs in long-term *professional development exchanges* among teachers and artists. In essence, as they worked together during this third year of the study, they learned to lean on each other, take further risks, reflect on their decisions, and offer alternative possibilities. Linda and Lesley increased their facility with dramatic techniques and used these strategies to open up even more space for "kid talk." Gordon and Mark learned to listen more attentively to *all* children's voices, and they found that children's literature could be used to enhance children's written language.

And of course, the children benefited. As they worked with this evocative text by Van Allsburg (1984), scripting short scenes to match the illustrations, they asked and answered multiple questions, pondered possibilities, agreed and disagreed, tested out new vocabulary, and brought their background knowledge to bear on the issues at hand. Thus, the adults' willingness to engage in an innovative curriculum as well as closely attend to children's oral and written language, resulted in the adults developing a language of their own—one that emphasised their excitement and engagement with continual professional learning.



All of the adults extended their newfound learning out into other communities as well. Following on the success of creating the pirate play and working much more collaboratively with teachers and children, Gordon and Mark took their new model of working into a new Creative Partnerships project in two schools that staged *Waiting for Godot*. A BBC website article on the success of this project proclaimed:

The project entailed 10-weeks of intensive theatre workshops that encouraged the young people and teaching staff to explore and investigate the process of theatre production including: direction, set design, staging and script analysis.... Although the young people aren't part of the final stage production their contribution to the stage work has been vital, as Theatre Cap-a-Pie have taken onboard the creative elements from the workshops and the comments made by the young people. They were also a force in the design of the "Waiting for Godot" set.

This work as well as other projects with other schools demonstrate Mark and Gordon's expanding repertoire. Quite different from their earlier work with schools, the actors were now much more interested in developing collaborative relationships with teachers as well as working even more closely with young children to develop their oral and written language skills.

The teachers, too, began to move further out of their comfort zone and help other teachers learn to invest in drama. Indeed, the conference at the University of Warwick was only the first of many professional opportunities Linda and Lesley were to experience in the study's third year. Invitations to speak began to trickle in, and at first they were largely local requests. For example, because Bexhill is a training school for teachers, Linda and Lesley were asked to provide a one-hour inset after a school day to a group of newly qualified and established teachers. They opened the session by describing their collaboration with Mark and Gordon, but quickly moved on to demonstrate several drama techniques. They also incorporated their *Mysteries of Harris Burdick* (Van Allsburg, 1984) work, distributing several of the book's pictures and asking the participants to generate questions about their selected illustration. Although there were the usual hesitations from teachers who felt distanced from drama, Linda and Lesley got them up on their feet, actively participating in several drama scenarios. Linda summarised the workshop highlighting the need for "drama and looking deeply into text," and the participants were impressed. In their evaluations of the workshop, 14 out of 15 participants felt they had "learned new strategies" and in the section for comments, the participants wrote:

- I have been inspired by the chance to try different strategies and hear stories from current classroom practitioners;
- I felt very motivated by the course as Linda and Lesley addressed feelings I had and encouraged me to put something into motion;
- I liked all the activities, especially seeing how simple activities can be carried out with limited drama knowledge and experience;
- I knew nothing about drama, but I do now, thanks to Linda and Lesley's fab enthusiasm and expertise.
- I'm inspired by the personal crusades of Linda and Lesley against an oppressive curriculum. They are the Robin Hoods of Drama!

There is an old expression in the teaching profession that "all teachers are thieves"; they look for good ideas and steal them and adapt them to make them their own. In the first two years of the study, Linda and Lesley had done just this, but now—like Robin Hood of old—they were trying to distribute the richness of their own experiences to a population of teachers in need of new ideas.

For the rest of the year, Linda and Lesley presented in a variety of venues. They conducted an inset with the other Bexhill teachers, after the staff came to see a repeat performance of *The Amazing Adventures of Mary Lou and the Ice Cream Pirates*, and they were instrumental in reminding the actors to make the drama activities easily accessible for a group that might feel somewhat embarrassed to engage in front of their peers. In addition, Linda and Lesley took five of the children who were involved in *Mary Lou to London*, and together with their children they presented to a large CP gathering focused on “Listening to Young People.” The Bexhill children were the youngest at the conference, and during their presentation video cameras, boom mikes, and bright lights surrounded them. It was enough to make even the most experienced presenter nervous, but the children and their teachers stood their ground.

The teachers presented at a conference hosted by Leicester CP who were trying to recruit artists and Head Teachers to their project. Lesley explained, “We did about an hour’s presentation, but unlike the other people delivering at the conference we did a more interactive workshop and included some of the drama techniques Mark and Gordon had shown us.” Their presentation was another success. In the thank you letter they received, the conference organiser wrote: “I wanted to pass on a huge thanks from the CP Leicester team for your participation in Boot Camp and presenting detailed and energising case studies. We have had consistently positive feedback from school coordinators and creative practitioners.”

The teachers presented their *Harris Burdick* work to a group of Head Teachers at Sunderland’s National Glass Centre, hosted by CP Durham Sunderland, and they presented with me at the Exchange Building in Sunderland to another crowd of teachers, artists, and CP staffers. They planned for another CP recruiting event with Mark and Gordon, introducing them to a picturebook entitled *The Tunnel* by Anthony Browne (1992). Together they presented a workshop to teachers in Dipton integrating the text with drama activities. The teachers later conducted the same workshop with their cluster schools. Lesley wrote that they brought along many of their Drama Club children as a “demonstration to the other teachers that it could work with kids. It was very successful, and the kids were brilliant.” Several teachers from this workshop returned to Bexhill at a later date, and Linda and Lesley went through many of the picturebooks they had collected, and they discussed how they could be used in creative ways.

In all of these sessions Linda and Lesley stressed the power of their partnership with Gordon and Mark. Together they wrote up the high points of their work, which they consistently accentuated in their presentations:

We can't emphasise enough that you need to be flexible, open minded, and adventurous. But we always agreed to try and plan the next step, use the kids' language and ideas, consult the children before we make decisions, and give them control and possession of the project. We acted as safety nets to each other; we helped Mark and Gordon get down to the children's level in explanations and organisation, while they dragged us along with their technical abilities and judgement. But we were never put on the spot. We trusted each other's judgement. The strength lay in the partnership—a united front between artists, teachers, and children. We were committed and believed in what we were doing.

We can only urge you to give it a go. It won't be easy. It won't be perfect. There will be failure along the way. But what you always have is belief in the kids and your own judgement. The success is worth it, and it has a great part to do with what most of us come into teaching to experience—a journey with the children, mutual respect and learning, mutual satisfaction and purpose.

In delivering these words in their varied presentations, Linda and Lesley stressed the success of their partnership, but they didn't hesitate to remind their audiences of the difficulties ahead. While their partnership wasn't "easy" or "perfect" and could even lead to "failure," the adults served as each other's "safety nets," exchanging their expertise in frank and open ways.

This kind of honesty is especially critical when push comes to shove. In their discussions of teachers working together, Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth (2001) suggest:

In a professional community of teachers, a core responsibility is to the learning of other teachers. This responsibility might entail contributing to group discussions, pressing others to clarify their thoughts, engaging in intellectual midwifery for the ideas of others, and providing resources for others' learning. If a feature of pseudocommunity is withdrawal from the public space when conflict erupts, then a feature of a mature community is the willingness to engage in critique in order to further collective understanding. (p. 980)

The same comment could be applied to this creative partnership. The teachers and artists had been through the high waters and low tides of the pirate play and safely stayed on board. In this third year of the study, their collaboration continued as they created new projects for children with literature and collaborated on professional development for other teachers. Even when they disagreed over texts, techniques, or timing, they were able to come to compromise. Indeed, their conversations were marked by collaboration (the use of “we” and “our”), consensus (“I agree...”), considerate disagreement (“I see what you mean, but...”), and care for each other’s learning (“Let me show you...” and “Have you considered...?”).

Linda, Lesley, Gordon, and Mark were willing to work in collaborative ways because they had an even stronger commitment to the children. Linda later reflected on their relationship:

...we had to then decide are we going to commit to this? We had to build up a working relationship with Cap-a-Pie with Mark and Gordon at the time. And that didn’t run as smoothly initially. But then we did find a shared commitment, so after that the problems, the disagreements, whatever were easier to iron out because we knew where everybody’s focus lay, and everybody—At the end of the day, the focus was the children. So the adults might disagree about the detail, but we did have the shared commitment.

Linda’s comment, combined with what she and Lesley wrote for their presentations, emphasise why individuals choose teaching. They want opportunities for a shared commitment to children with other professionals. Often these professionals are other teachers, but in this case the work was shared with artists, as they all came to increasingly believe that very young children are capable of extraordinary things. While clearly the process had its ups and downs, the focus was on the journey—“a journey with the children, mutual respect and learning, mutual satisfaction and purpose.”

Still, it's important to look at how Linda and Lesley ultimately characterised their work: "...what you always have is belief in the kids and your own judgment." The last part of this statement is critical when one considers how teachers can become deskilled in an atmosphere that stresses standardised test preparation and "teacher-proof" curricula instead being challenged to lean on their own innovative ideas. In the development of this creative partnership, Linda and Lesley had not only learned to develop a trusting relationship with Gordon and Mark, but even more importantly, they had learned to trust themselves. This trust was key to the transformation of their practice as they entered into the fourth year of the study.

Year Four: Taking on the Mantle

The fourth year was a time of even more expansive professional development. The teachers and actors continued to work together from time to time, but it was much more a period of burgeoning independence along with the forming of new partnerships. Mark decided to leave Cap-a-Pie altogether; he was increasingly interested in different theatrical forms, especially clown doctoring. After training in France, he set up "'Perfect Fools', a performance company that experiments with clowning, spontaneity and imaginative play." Mark and his fellow clown doctors "visit sick children in hospitals all over the North East of England, to support them through what can be a traumatic and frightening time."

Social commitment has always been a driving force for Cap-a-Pie, and Gordon stayed on as director to continue the work that he and Mark began over a decade ago. Their theatre, The Store, is a thriving business, and Gordon and his company members put on plays and workshops for a variety of age groups, often linking theatre with courses in Emotional Intelligence as well as Community of Enquiry. On the Cap-a-Pie website, their stated philosophy reads:

We continually seek to develop an understanding of the place of theatre arts in society and are currently pre-occupied with the following overarching question: "Can theatre arts processes contribute to the development of creative thinking?" Due to this, the current direction of our work involves creating professional productions in a unique and exciting way, by developing new work in close collaboration with educators and learners throughout the entire rehearsal period. During the process we explore text and performance development in educational settings, working together in an atmosphere of shared creative endeavour towards a clear and valuable outcome.

The words “close collaboration,” “working together,” and “shared creative endeavour” indicate just how far along the road of partnership Cap-a-Pie has come.

One of the innovative new projects Gordon embarked on in the first part of the year was an event entitled “Imagine a City.” Gordon enlisted the help of an architect, a film-maker, a photographer, and a dancer/choreographer to develop the project for participants—asking them to take on the roles of the imaginary city’s inhabitants. Once in role, “citizens” move in and out of the four quadrants of the city, with each quadrant offering different life choices and potential relationships. As the city and its society evolve, the population comes to establish its own “rhythms, patterns, and priorities.” Within the society, citizens shift in their roles as they progress through life. Thus roles could be “assumed, conferred, cast off, re-imagined, and invested in.”

The ability to shift into new roles and re-imagine others was a vibrant part of Linda and Lesley’s year as well. A variety of new professional opportunities arose, all in quick succession, which led them to meet with a host of new people. In the pursuit of their deepening interest in literature and young children’s writing, I suggested that they attend the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project in the summer of 2006, and Lorna Fulton of CP Durham Sunderland financed their participation. For two weeks the teachers lived in New York and attended workshops by noted children’s book authors and American literacy scholars, participating in classes during the day and studying at night. They came home with many new ideas for revamping their literacy hour—particularly the time that had previously been devoted to the instruction of phonics. Linda commented:

Thanks to CP, we went to New York in July and attended Lucy Calkins’s workshop on reading and writing. We came back with this approach, and we’ve been using it and the children [her voice softens]—I mean it’s just that their attitude towards books and reading is so different. I’ve still got children who can’t read, but they’re so positive. Because in the past we’ve taught reading as decoding—phonics and decoding—and that was it.... And our whole relationship to the children as readers has changed, because we’re readers and so are they.... So we’ve got like a reading community. Yes, we still teach phonics, but we give them a purpose. We try to create *life-long* readers.

The focus on phonics is not uncommon in the U.K. and it is equally pervasive in the United States—perhaps even more so. Thus, to attend sessions by speakers dedicated to the power of real reading and writing in children’s lives gave Linda and Lesley further support for their own ideas. When they began the fourth year of the study, they set up more time for reading in their classrooms, moving away from the scheme books and levelled readers to use even more literature. They also set up an afternoon a week where they invited parents to come in and read with the children, but as Linda explained, “not to listen to children read, but to read alongside children.” Seeing their parents engaged in the pleasure of reading was an unusual event for the children of Bexhill.

Two other significant events occurred in the fall of the fourth year, both arranged by Lorna Fulton. In her role as Director of CP Durham Sunderland, she decided to finance four Advanced Skills Teachers (AST) and offered Linda and Lesley the opportunity to share one position or for one of them to take up this position in its entirety. Yet, while Lorna could supply the financing, she could not name specific teachers to this position, for that decision was up to a national authority. An Ofsted (2003) description explains this position:

Advanced skills teachers (ASTs) were introduced by the government in 1998 to help schools attract and retain excellent classroom teachers and to increase staff motivation, raise pupils’ achievement levels and broaden the skills and knowledge base of schools. ASTs are required to undertake a range of additional duties, over and above their own teaching and other responsibilities, to help raise the quality of teaching and the standards of attainment in their own (or ‘home’) school and in other (‘outreach’) schools. Around 20% of their time should be given to this ‘outreach’ work.

The timing of Lorna’s invitation was short and the application long and complicated. Even more daunting, once the application was complete—including the candidate’s application, the Head Teacher’s supporting materials, as well as other letters of recommendation—the candidate would then undergo “external assessment.” A national inspector would observe the candidate’s practice against national AST standards.

Both Linda and Lesley debated the advantages and disadvantages, weighing the opportunities offered against the additional work and time out of their classrooms. Linda had a particularly difficult class in the fourth year of the study, including a number of children with especially low academic as well as social skills, and in the end she decided not to apply. Lesley not only had a calmer and more academically capable class (with the exception of a very difficult special needs child), but she felt strongly that the outreach work the AST position demanded was something they had already begun. As a result, she decided to apply, assembling a thick notebook of the work she had completed with her Community of Enquiry and Creative Partnerships endeavours over the past several years. Both her application and her subsequent visit by an external evaluator were a success, and she received notice of her official acceptance in early November.

Intriguingly, however, the timing of the AST application process began only a day after Linda, Lesley, and I attended a workshop that was to transform their practice in significant ways. Throughout our work together, I had talked with Linda and Lesley about Dorothy Heathcote's mantle-of-the-expert approach. I felt strongly that there were critical links between the mantle-of-the-expert work and the kinds of dramatic practices the teachers engaged in on a day-to-day basis. Both teachers had read about mantle (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995), and they too believed that "drama can be used to deepen and extend any educational project" (Edmiston, 2007, p. 1). Gordon and Mark were also interested, and Lorna Fulton once again provided the funding. In late September, the five of us attended a mantle-of-the-expert conference in Newcastle.

The day was filled with informative speeches by mantle experts Luke Abbott and Brian Edmiston as well as a QCA representative Mike Rumble. The highlight of the day, of course, was Dorothy. Brilliant, articulate, and unpretentious, she not only provided an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of mantle-of-the-expert inquiry, but also led us in a workshop that highlighted history and restoration. A deep sense of mystery surrounded the project she introduced us to, and she reminded us that often "not knowing is more important than knowing." Yet, she provided an array of resources—images, letters, maps, and elevations that offered opportunities to puzzle over problems and collaboratively construct meaning. Most intriguingly, she emphasised restoring something, not building, and her admonition went hand in hand with her reminder that "mantle of the expert always has to begin in the middle." Thus, all the mantle projects she designs come with a history, ensuring that the past sparks future tasks. Heathcote (2007) explains:

The teacher needs to launch the enterprise as if it already has a history and at this point some new element is to be developed. Maybe a new client, or a change of building location or new arrangements inside. A useful model here is that of a theatre: the playwrights take up the actions and dilemmas of the people in the play at a point of significance. This then drives the action forward. In 'Hamlet', for example, his father is already dead under suspicious circumstances, so events must proceed from Hamlet's responsibilities and doubts about his father's demise and his mother's remarrying with Claudius. Theatre and 'Mantle of the Expert' work thus share this common purpose, that of doing, in now immediate times, that which is imperative to achieve. There is one radical difference, the playwright begins from a feeling or psychological basis, whereas 'Mantle of the Expert' begins with organisation and tasks. Thus, talent for acting is never a factor. Feeling and emotional involvement grows through caring for and commitment to the clients and belief in the enterprise. It is this which opens the gate of study, research, mastery of skills and dignity of responsibility. (p. 6)

The day with Dorothy opened the gate for Linda and Lesley as well. Both met with Lorna the day after the conference, and they raved about the day. Linda explained: "She was just amazing. This woman at eighty is still enthusiastic. And it's obviously her. It's something that comes from inside. She was *inspirational*. Yet, she was so unassuming." Both teachers were also impressed with Luke Abbot's closing remarks. Encouraging the roomful of participants to give mantle-of-the-expert inquiry a go, he explained, "It isn't important that you become an expert, it's important that you *begin*."

Intriguingly, Linda and Lesley had already begun with an idea. Lesley had a deep interest in the architecture of Newcastle and Gateshead, especially in recent years as the two cities underwent dramatic changes in the skyline along the Tyne. The Gateshead Millennium footbridge was added at the turn of the 21st century, and it was generally recognised as an architectural wonder that complemented many of the older fine bridges connecting the two sides of the Tyne. A 1950s flour mill was converted into The Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art. And the Sage Gateshead—an "international home for music and musical discovery"—was built on a landmark waterfront site on the Tyne as well. New businesses, housing developments, restaurants, and retail stores were springing up on both sides of the Tyne, combining old architecture with new.

Although Linda was not as much of an architectural buff as Lesley, she was intrigued with the idea of engaging their children in a project of regeneration. After the conference day with Dorothy Heathcote, they were especially struck with her idea that they needed to “launch the enterprise as if it already has a history and at this point some new element is to be developed. Maybe a new client, or a change of building location or new arrangements inside.” They described their initial ideas about their mantle-of-the-expert project to Lorna:

Lesley: We were trying to think about the question for the kids. If they were architects and were trying to bid to the council to rebuild some part of the city or something— So then how do we go about it? Or that we’re some sort of social group and we want our houses to be— So that’s what we have to look at now. What *social question* are we putting forward to the children that initiates the debate?

Linda: And now, after listening to Dorothy, we might end up doing something like looking at the Baltic or the Store— buildings that had a previous role, but the role had to change. It might be easier for the children to start with something that’s got the history, and *then* they’ve got to be innovative to change this.

Lesley: We could even find a derelict building along the quayside and say that’s our project.

Although their ideas were only in the planning stages, they knew they wanted to focus on a question of social import—something that would give their children an opportunity to debate as well as consider innovative ways to approach the particular question. And the idea of having their children take on the mantle of architectural expertise seemed the best way to go about it.

Later in the fall, as their ideas were still percolating, Gordon invited the teachers to participate in his “Imagine a City” project. They piloted the project with teenagers in Darlington and then presented it again for the Exciting Minds conference in Manchester later in the autumn. To help him run the quadrants, Gordon had enlisted the help of several other artists, including architect Tim Bailey of xsite architecture. The teachers liked his presentation style and his interest in pupil thinking, and when they asked him if he would join them in a project for their classes, Tim agreed. When I asked Tim why he chose to work with CP projects in the past as well as embark on another project with Linda and Lesley, he responded:

Working with young people enables a reminder (through explanation) of what it is I do. This is important as a reconnection with the principles and passion of the subject matter, and it can generate huge energy in the office. I also enjoy immensely the cut and thrust of working with minds that are growing, enquiring and discovering. It is alarming, charming and rewarding. I only met Linda and Lesley at Imagine a City, but was enormously impressed by their passion and drive to give their charges at Bexhill the best and most interesting opportunities. Also, I find it hard to resist a great idea.

Linda and Lesley were able to recognise a kindred spirit in Tim. They too were interested in the “passion and principles of their subject matter” and “the cut and thrust of working with young minds.” Equally important, they saw in Tim another possibility for deep collaboration with someone outside of their field.

The teachers met over the holidays to plan their work. They decided that the QCA unit on the Great Fire of London would serve as their starting point to give their children background on some of the reasons for restoration. They wanted to use it “as a base for collecting knowledge, looking at sources through witness accounts, diary entries, and recount.” Thus, they began the first week of the term teaching their children about the Great Fire. The children saw a video and went on the Internet to download sites. They discussed Samuel Pepys’ diary account of the fire, and they did a lot of drama—talking in role as the famous diarist, the king, and the maid. While the focus here had not been strong on regeneration, the teachers introduced the concept. Lesley suggested that the opportunity for rebuilding provided “a new chance to use new ideas. The children realised that this was an opportunity to rethink.”

In their planning for the mantle-of-the-expert project they wove the foregrounding of the Great Fire unit into a QCA art unit as well as integrated a number of QCA goals in ICT, science, maths, and literacy. Of course, in their planning, they didn’t follow the units to the letter; instead they took what made the most sense and adapted it to fit within their larger mantle project.

Linda: The Great Fire unit is a good unit. It’s not so tight that you feel as if you’re in a straight jacket, and you just regurgitate the facts. And it varies. We’ve taught this a few times, and each time it feels different. The very basics are there, but the children respond in different ways to it. So I think it is quite a flexible unit.

Lesley: And it also links into other units at the time like in art and technology. The art unit is called “Can Buildings Speak?” It’s about what a building can tell you from its shape or materials or its features.

Linda: The units that we planned for the term in January did fit in so well.

Lesley: We looked for the units where there would be the most cross-curricular links in a term, and it was this one. But with regard to cross-curricular links, some people stick rigidly to the individual units, but we’ve never done that.

On the QCA (2007) website the unit on buildings is described in the following way: “In this unit children explore shape and pattern in buildings. They begin by producing prints and rubbings of patterns found in buildings and go on to look at, and record, the use of shape, space and pattern in local buildings. They question how these features tell us something about the purpose of the building. They work in groups to produce a relief sculpture for temporary display, using their first-hand observations as a starting point.”

But for Linda and Lesley, this unit as well as the Great Fire unit, were just starting points as well, for they had larger plans in mind. After much discussion, they decided the children’s “challenge” would be to help in the regeneration of a specific building along the Ouseburn, and they chose Seven Stories as their site. They contacted the museum to get photographs of the building *before* restoration began and collected a set of scenes of the decrepit shell of the building—with rooms in shambles, littered with an assortment of trash from over the years. But they didn’t tell the children about Seven Stories or show them the photographs yet.

Instead, working with Tim, they constructed a weekend homework assignment asking the children to consider favourite buildings in their own city of Sunderland as well as study their own homes in Town End Farm. They asked parents to help their children answer a number of questions about building materials (brick, stone, concrete, etc.) and what they could surmise about “strong shapes”—arches, triangles, and rectangular doorframes. They asked the children to make drawings of the things they noticed, explaining that both the questionnaire and their sketches would “be excellent preparation for our next project.”

Then they went on a walking tour, and as they threaded their way along the Ouseburn footpath accompanied by Linda, Lesley, and Tim, they pointed to and shouted out the matches they made. They found the office sign on Lime Street and the door on Foundry Lane. They discovered the image of the storybook at Seven Stories and quickly found the propeller of the Sea Song Sang as well. But beyond their remarks on the photo quiz, the children asked Tim multiple questions: “Why is that window different? Why were there arches in that bridge?” And as they walked and talked, they took photographs and made sketches of the details of derelict buildings that lined the bank as well as the magnificent bridges all around. Linda and Lesley felt that the children were very engaged as Tim “worked the crowd,” moving up and down the length of the 45 children to talk about particular features.



Linda: They were noticing things you wouldn't expect a six or seven-year-old to notice. They were focused, weren't they?

Lesley: Yes. They were picking up bits of metal that they found on the ground and asking, "Do you think this is a part of a building?" [Laughs] They wanted to be purposeful.

Linda: And they were asking the right questions because when we got to the back of Seven Stories, though they didn't know what that building was, there were workmen there on scaffolding and others were delivering things. Tim had to stop to answer their questions: "What were the men doing there?" And they were asking about the features. For example, there was a crack in the pipe, and they asked how did he think that had occurred. Was it weathering? So they were really interested. And they were looking to see how modern workmen and engineers were looking after these buildings.

Lesley: It was amazing to see how focused and motivated the children were. They didn't waste their photo shots. They looked for unusual buildings, signs, textures or patterns, and they explained why they were taking them.

The children showed their genuine engagement not only with their focus, but also through questions that linked their queries with "purpose." They were curious about aspects of particular features, trying to sort out the functions of forms and materials, as well as assess what might have gone wrong when a particular part failed, such as the "crack in the pipe." Rather than zip around taking photographs of the first things they saw, they were careful in their choices and they could provide justification for their choices as well.

After their walking tour, they all returned to the Ouseburn Regeneration Centre where Tim set them a task. As Lesley explained, he wanted them to "think about where they would like to live on the Ouseburn. What would the building be like? What features would it have? What would their bedroom window look over? The children set to work designing their dream houses. They included ramps for the less able bodied, fabulous unusable windows, and amazing staircases. Many annotated the details of materials or functions."

Some children made astonishingly imaginative houses, like Beth's mushroom-shaped house. Still, she made several drafts of her house until she was satisfied and then placed her final version along a road with flowers blooming all around. She wrote that her house was made of bricks, tile, and glass, and it towered over the neighbourhood with "lots of stairs to see over houses about 20 feet."

Other children made more traditional houses. Ross, for example, made a typical rectangle house with a triangle of a roof on top. But he carefully divided up the space inside labelling the sitting room, dining room, and backroom. He put two bedrooms upstairs and gave himself a bedroom in the loft, which he carefully placed in the middle of his triangled roof. He specified that the house would be made of bricks, and he added a square off the side of the house for the garden. Then he placed his home along a winding road through the Ouseburn adding other structures that he numbered with a matching key for Foundry Lane and Ouseburn Farm.

The children were so involved in their tasks that at the end of the day Lesley wrote: "They didn't want to leave! Luke said 'I wish this day was forever.'" Lesley continued, "When we got back to school various parents came in to ask, 'Where is this Ouseburn place? [My child] wants to go back at the weekend!'" Yet, underlying all this enthusiasm, the teachers were confronted with a major dilemma. On the day before the children met Tim, the school received notification that their much-overdue Ofsted inspection would take place at the end of the week.

Lesley: We found out that Ofsted were coming on Monday and we were going to visit Tim on the Tuesday and we thought—

Linda: "Oh, no!"

Lesley: So, I emailed Tim and said, "If we look a bit fraught..."

Linda: Because, although we were on the trip and enjoying it, our minds were racing with "What are we going to do with this when we get back?"

Lesley: The pressure was on. Whereas, we could have just idled through and thought, nothing has to come of it, but we wanted something fantastic to come of it. We had planned it all before, but with Ofsted!



According to the official website, Ofsted (2007) “is a process of gathering evidence to inform assessment of how well a school is performing. In line with recent changes, the frequency, length and number of inspectors involved is in proportion to the need for guidance to support improvement. These then result in one of four grades: outstanding, good, satisfactory or inadequate.”

Schools submit a self-evaluation form (SEF) on line, and among the recent changes was much more attention to a school’s ability to evaluate themselves with accuracy. While the process promised to be supportive, inspections in the past had a reputation for being rather negative or, at the very least, high-pressure experiences. Thus, the teachers’ quandary. Linda and Lesley debated long and hard and searched their pedagogical souls for what to do. They knew they could easily prepare more traditional lessons to meet the typical expectations, but they also felt committed to the mantle project they had envisioned for their children. Though it was tempting to hug the shore, they decided to continue their journey as planned.

On Thursday, the first day of the Ofsted inspection, the teachers began what they considered to be their “first official mantle-of-the-expert day.” And just as Linda was beginning her instruction, an inspector and Bexhill’s Head Teacher entered her classroom. Linda told her children that a letter had arrived from Tim asking for help in turning an old building into a children’s centre. He explained that he had recently bought a 100-year-old factory that had been derelict for years. The building was now simply an “empty shell,” and he wanted to turn the space into a place “for children to enjoy.” He already had many ideas for the rooms—including a café, quiet reading room, role-play area, and bookshop—but he needed their help “to design the interiors and decide which room should be used for each idea.” He further explained, “Your brief is to use the photographs and information I have sent you to design each room and allocate which space it should occupy.”

The most intriguing thing about this challenge was that the letter didn’t come from Tim at all. He had no building, nor a need for the children’s help. Instead, Linda and Lesley selected the “before” pictures of Seven Stories, and they crafted the labels and letter to shape an imaginary enterprise that would allow their children to take on the mantle of architectural expertise.

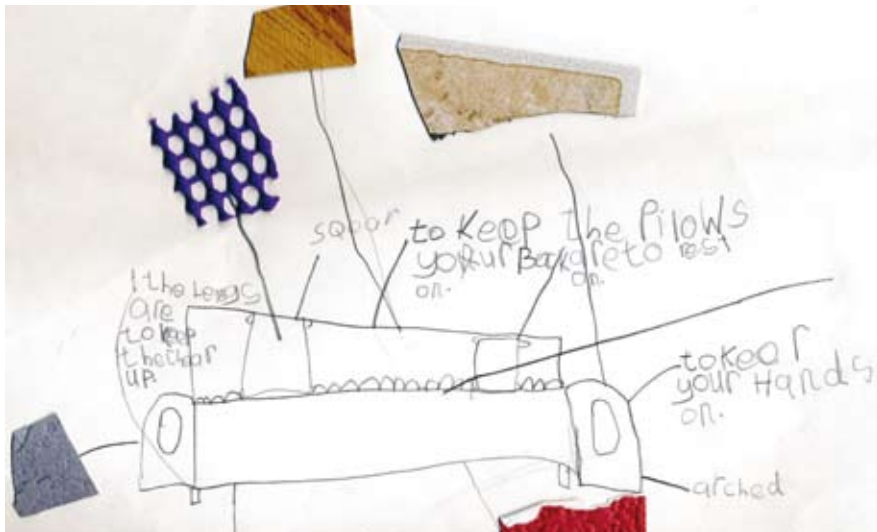
Linda: So this letter arrived with a range of photographs along with labels that weren't attached to anything, and of course the Ofsted inspector was there with Joy. We opened the letter, and the kids went "Ahhhh!" And we made a big thing about it asking, "Were we able to help Tim?" You know, "I'm a teacher and you're six or seven. Do we really know how to do this? It's a big thing, and you've got to work to a deadline." We had already put them into design teams—

Lesley: — of mixed ability.

Linda: Design teams of two or three, and Tim's problem was he had bought this building. He wanted to renovate it. And the Ofsted inspector was very impressed because of the language that came out. He commented that the children are coming into school with such poor language skills, and yet he said that "they were all functioning at a Level 2." So I was pleased with that.

The choice of labelling the rooms continued past lunch and into the afternoon. The children began to discuss the features of the rooms and where they would put doors and windows and whether they would leave the exposed beams. The children sketched and talked and talked and sketched, asking questions like "What would you have to have in a bookshop?" The next day they had to choose one feature—a chair perhaps—and the teachers provided material swatches. "What would the design be? What materials would be used? And label why it was that design." A chair in the bookshop would be different from a chair in the café. Linda wrote, "So they were starting to realise that a chair wasn't just a chair. It had a purpose."

Another Ofsted inspector visited Lesley's class, and she spent a lot of time looking through the plans that Lesley had crafted with Linda and talking to the children. Lesley laughingly explained, "But to be honest they were a bit dismissive of her because they were busy! She left after about 40 minutes and then she came back to give me feedback and because we go last for lunch they were still on task, so it was really good that she walked in and they were still completely focused, debating things. They were really into it. And so she said, 'Right! I'll catch you later.' [And later she said] That was really good, and I think you'll be dead pleased with the report."



Yes and no. The school as a whole received a satisfactory rating. Although the inspectors recognised that most children entering Bexhill had “very low levels of skills,” their overall rating seemed to have much to do with student performance on tests, particularly at Key Stage 2. Still, several areas including curriculum were given a “good” rating. In the Ofsted report the inspectors wrote, “The curriculum is good because it is broad and balanced and offers exciting enrichment opportunities.... Drama features very strongly across the curriculum. As a result, pupils’ speaking and listening skills, as well as their creativity and social development, continue to improve.”

After her feedback session, Linda questioned a point in her inspector’s critique. Thinking about the session when the children were reading and discussing Tim’s letter, he commented: “I’d have to say they were all engaged, but maybe it was too long to keep them on the carpet.” Linda responded, “But it had to be because if I’d sent them off too early, it could have been a shambles.” She felt very strongly that the children needed “preparation work” with ample opportunities to “verbalise some ideas” before they went off to work in pairs on room design. Lesley agreed, “Well, that’s getting back to the literacy hour with 10 minutes here, 10 minutes there instead of a natural break.” Both wondered how it could have been “too long on the carpet” if the children were “all engaged.” Rather than being chopped up into designated time periods based on poorly conceived notions of young children’s short attention spans, Linda and Lesley now looked for the “natural breaks.” As Linda explained, “Because we weren’t teaching in lessons, this process went on virtually all day.”

Indeed, the process went on for another two weeks. The following Monday, the teachers told their children that Tim had “looked at the plans, but he needed to order materials—tiles. He wanted to get cracking but he wasn’t sure how many tiles they would need so how were they going to work it out? We talked about all the ways you could work out how many were needed.” The children worked through a variety of approaches. They marked out a square metre on the carpet, but when they didn’t have enough tiles, they had to problem solve with what they had. In Linda’s class they worked on the problem for three hours, until suddenly Adam figured out how they could multiply to work it out. Four or five children in Lesley’s class decided on multiplication right away, but there were lots of additional issues, particularly when Lesley asked them how they would deal with the angles in the room. Linda and Lesley differentiated instruction so that special needs children were highly included in matching tiles and deciding on certain sequences in patterns.

The children sent their final estimations off to Tim that afternoon, but the next day an email from Tim said that he needed help with colours. The teachers explained, “Tim had thought that in the kitchen they needed grey tiles, but one of the girls in his office had said ‘that will make people miserable and depressed.’ And Tim didn’t understand what she was talking about. And then the kids popped up with ‘Why not use yellow. It’s nice and sunny.’ They knew straight away that certain colours create certain moods.”

The teachers read them poems about colour, and then they had to think about what things they associated with a colour. They did it in teams and generated colour webs, which they labelled with inventive words. Blue was “cryful,” for example. They then ascribed phrases to certain colours like “crispy, chilly red.” In the afternoon they decided on colour tones for their room, and the children experimented with paint to make a “peachy red” or a “pinky red,” all the while thinking about how their colour choices would make an effective background for their furniture. One pair of children, for example, chose green and called up images of “lying on the grass” and “eating a fresh apple.” Because Linda and Lesley were trying to get the children to think about how you set a scene, they wrote “painting your room light green and sitting on a green settee, playing in the room with green all around you.”

With each and every new task the teachers set, they suggested that Tim had sent them either an email or had come before or after school. Other times, they told the children that Tim had sent a courier to pick up their day's work. They continually stressed the need for the children to commit to the work, but the children seemed eager to meet the needs of their "client" themselves.

Lesley: We were saying things like, "When Tim's got a project he probably doesn't have time for lunch or anything, you know? You can't just say, 'Right, I'm working an hour, and then I'm having a break.'"

Linda: They had to connect themselves to the work.

Lesley: You know, "You might have to work through playtime."

Linda: In mine, I had couriers arriving. The deadline was "he needs this part of the project done by such and such a time, and it's so important he's sending a courier to collect these things. He can't go on to the next part of the project till he's got them. He's got to check them and give feedback." So he kept giving us feedback through email and phone calls.

Shelby: And this was all hypothetical?

Lesley: Yes, and he had popped in just before school.

Shelby: [Laughs] "You just missed him!"

Although it was an "as if" world that the children entered into, it was a world in which they steadfastly believed. As they worked to meet Tim's "deadlines," they made substantive design decisions, debating and collaborating, comparing and contrasting ideas, taking Tim's feedback into account or convincing him that they had sound justification for their choices.

In another task, the teachers asked them to test materials. Groups of four or five had to scientifically test for particular properties. One group checked blinds for the windows, and they used torches to test the light through various materials. Another group focused on waterproof material for the canopy. Still another looked at non-slip flooring. This work later played out in intriguing ways when the teachers took them on another fieldtrip to Newcastle's Discovery Museum. The museum had a number of fantastic displays including an exhibition on the Great Fire of Newcastle, which connected well to the children's earlier work on the London fire. There was also the 35-metre Turbinia—a ship built on Tyneside, which was the first to be powered by a steam turbine and once the fastest ship in the world.

About this vessel, the museum boasts, “Situated at the heart of the museum she immediately grabs the attention of visitors.” But the Bexhill children were less interested in the polished exhibitions than the building itself.

Linda: So there are all these fantastic exhibits there, and these kids were racing around looking for metal rivets and non-slip flooring. And there was an exhibit of the Great Fire of Newcastle, and I would say that 75% of the free time they had wasn't looking at the exhibits, but looking at the features of the building. They said things like, “I know why those beams are triangles, because triangles are the strongest.” And “that's an original window because there's stained glass at the top. And if you look, they get smaller the higher up you go because glass was expensive, you know.” They were lying on the floor, looking at tile patterns: “Look at this tessellation!”

Lesley: They were saying, “Oh, this is rubber flooring 'cause it's non-slip.”

Linda: This was the really gratifying thing because they were transferring their skills.

Lesley: And it wasn't stimulated by us.

Linda: [Laughs] And they were looking for opportunities to tell people.

Shelby: So they had this exhibit on the Great Fire of Newcastle, and they virtually ignored it and looked at windows?!

Lesley: [Laughs] Yes! I mean the Discovery Museum has a big ship and there are bits of train. There are train wheels—

Linda: And it's very interactive.

Lesley: But they were walking around and saying in very loud voices, “And that's a metal beam. It's holding the roof up.”

Linda: “And this must be part of the new addition because look at the window.”

Lesley: “The roof is made out of glass!”

The children's pride in their new knowledge revealed itself not only in their accurate assessments of building materials, but also in their “loud voices” and desire “to tell people.”

When the children returned to school, they were ready for Tim's next task. But just as they were humming along with their planning, Linda and Lesley threw a wrench into the works by crafting another letter. This one was from the Newcastle City Council on letterhead stationery (which Linda designed) to Mr. Bailey suggesting that there were objections to his plans. The letter read:

Dear Mr. Bailey,

In connection with your recent planning application to renovate the old warehouse in The Ouseburn Valley and to update it and change it into a centre for children, I regret to inform you that we have received a number of objections from elderly local residents.

The local senior citizens group has expressed concerns that there are no facilities locally to meet their needs and feel that it is unjust to devote the whole renovation project to meeting the needs of children and young people.

We need to review your application in light of this, but would be interested if you could adjust your initial application to take account of the objections and re-submit it as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Ms. L. Lincoln,
Leader of Newcastle City Planning Department

Linda and Lesley wondered about the children's reaction to this missive. As Lesley wrote: "I was expecting some disappointed faces. However, they were incredibly mature about it." She continued:

When we considered the objections of the "Senior Citizens," they were very accommodating. They thought of the type of activities the elderly would like to do. They then suggested a shared timetable of some of the spaces for reading, dancing, or just having a cup of tea and a chat. They really hooked onto and developed the idea of it being a central meeting place where the old folk would meet friends, go on fishing trips up the river, visit new places, and learn about how to stay healthy. *Who says young people today don't consider others?*



In this process the children learned to compromise. They not only thought of ways to share the resources in the rooms, but also thought of ways to timetable spaces. They even gave up one of their rooms so that the elderly could have it exclusively. They conducted a survey on what the elderly like to do to help inform their choices. Thus, rather than complain or resist, the children took on the challenge created by the “Council Objection Letter” to imaginatively place their very young selves into the minds of the elderly and rethink the use of their new space.

As the end of the project neared, some of the children—particularly in Linda’s class—began to tire, so the teachers sent another letter from Tim reminding them that he “was paid on results,” so unless it was finished “he would have a problem.” Thus, the children who “were flagging a bit” reenergised themselves to finish their work, and they met the final deadlines. As a culminating activity, they visited Tim again, and this time they discussed the many magnificent bridges that cross the Tyne. The children’s final task was to work in teams and design a bridge to connect two tables in the middle of the room. The only materials they had were cellotape and paper, and in the process they tried all different methods of supporting their structures. The children enjoyed the challenge. As one child wrote, “I liked building the bridge because it was fun, and my team found different ways to support it. We used cylinders and triangles. I liked supporting the bridge.”

In building bridges, support is essential. Certain shapes—pillars, arches, and triangles—lend strength to the support. Throughout the mantle project, Linda and Lesley looked to a variety of people for support—Dorothy Heathcote for her inspiration, Tim Bailey for his architectural expertise, and me as a sounding board for their ideas—but the strongest support was the strength of their own relationship and their commitment to children:

Linda: We work well because we are totally different, but we actually complement each other and support each other. There are things that we don’t necessarily agree on, but we give each other leeway.

Lesley: I think Linda was apprehensive about the subject matter of the mantle project because she doesn’t have a love of buildings. So I probably pushed the content side of this project. I think Linda was like, “Oh, no. Buildings?!” But what Linda brought to it was more the social content of it, like the Council idea. So we did different things and we shared different ideas, and it balanced in the end.



- Linda: And it's funny because the outcomes—even though we were planning side by side—the outcomes were different because our children are different, and we emphasise different things in our instruction.
- Lesley: But that's the nice part of the mantle—that passion side of it as opposed to the target led or the outcome led.
- Linda: This is it, you see, because I think I'm more passionate than Lesley is, but at the end of the day, we trust each other. If something goes wrong, we can sit down and try and work out why it went wrong so that we don't make the same mistake again.
- Lesley: Because we trust one another, we know we're allowed to fail. But at the heart of it is the fact that we both feel the same way about the kids and what we want our kids to get out of it. It centres around what we feel the rights of the kids are and what they're entitled to. They're entitled to experiences that give them learning outcomes. So the ethos is still the same, even though we both have different approaches to it.

Throughout this project, Linda and Lesley worked to rethink the use of their classroom space. “Lessons” with particular time boundaries disappeared, and what happened within a certain space of time deeply impacted on their planning for the next day.

Although they had spent many hours over the holidays planning, nothing could be set in stone for so much depended on the children's interests and daily accomplishments. Thus, this project marked a particularly critical turning point for Linda and Lesley. While they had a great deal of support from other experts, it was more important that they had each other. And the fact that so much of the project was conceived, created, and critiqued by the two teachers makes it clear that they had successfully built the bridge from their old curriculum to the new and crossed over to the other side.

Research Endings and New Beginnings

Linda and Lesley helped me to carefully plan my final trip to Bexhill to witness some aspects of their mantle work. I had been unable to visit during the three-week duration of their project, though they kept me up-to-date through email and had given me extensive interview data about the project when I visited in the spring. During that visit, I asked them to pick four students in each of their classes—children that represented a wide range in terms of gender, academic skills, and dramatic engagement. I asked them if we could possibly meet with Tim in the city, so I could get an idea of the interactions between the children and the architect, as well as see the Ouseburn area and all the regeneration work that was moving apace. I also asked to see Lesley in action with some of her AST work, as well as ample time to interview them about the mantle-of-the-expert project. I especially wanted their help in explaining the context of the children’s sketches and writings during the project as well as the teachers’ final reflections on the work of the last four years.

In my classroom observations, the teachers had begun yet another project. On one of their many hunts through Waterstone’s, they found a book entitled *Dragon’s Egg* (Hawcock, 2006) that came with a small paper dragon that emerged from its own paper shell. They thought it would be the perfect impetus for their next idea. As with the Ouseburn project, Linda and Lesley crafted an imaginary letter, this time from an official asking the children to help with the care and feeding of this baby dragon, and the children eagerly signed on. Not a single child questioned whether the paper dragon was real, nor did they blink when in a few days time, Linda and Lesley replaced the baby with a much larger stuffed dragon, exclaiming at how it had grown over the weekend. Because Linda and Lesley were interested in helping their children learn about expository text, over the next few weeks they had their children write “chapters” for their own class book entitled *How to Look After a Dragon*.

The children took on the task with relish, writing chapters with such titles as: “Building a Dragon’s Home,” “How to Keep a Dragon Safe,” “Teaching Dragons to Fly,” “How to Teach a Dragon to Read,” and “Dragon’s Diet.” For this last chapter, they decided that a balanced diet was important. Milk would be good for the dragon’s bones and teeth. Burnt pancakes were something the dragon also needed, especially for breakfast, that is when he wasn’t eating Flamebix in lieu of Weetabix cereal. They felt that hot foods were critical for his flame-blowing capacity and suggested fireballs, chilies, mustard, and other spicy food. At every turn, the teachers asked for justification for their choices, and the children were able to provide them. For example, they suggested that carrots were essential for the dragon to see in the dark.

During one of my observations the children built a list of instructions for teaching their dragon to fly. Ross began the conversation by showing the class a sketch he’d made of a contraption that would help the dragon get airborne, and he had carefully labelled his drawing with parts as well as instructions. For example, he was clear that the dragon shouldn’t breathe fire while in the sky because of the danger to airplanes, and he cautioned, “When flying never stop flapping.” As he demonstrated his contraption to his classmates, they came up with other suggestions including the fact that constant flapping might not be necessary because the dragon could glide like a bird, and they watched the birds outside of their classroom to confirm this conjecture. They recommended that the dragon keep his head up and his tail down, and that it was important not to try and take off from slippery surfaces. Listening to their suggestions, Lesley commented, “You’ve put in a lot of safety ideas that I hadn’t thought of. We learned about slippery surfaces when we worked with Tim, didn’t we?”

Lesley was learning to navigate some slippery surfaces of her own. In our discussion of her AST work, she explained that she had already been contacted by over 40 schools that wanted everything from a short INSET training session on drama to “rewriting their whole curriculum!” She kept a diary of the time and tasks connected with her AST work. One visit, for example, had the following notation:

Delivered INSET for Ropery Walk Primary School to all staff and TAs with the aim to develop a creative curriculum for next year. Demonstrated quick-fire drama techniques, thinking skills formats, discussed reasoning, and linked to new Literacy Strategy. Showed some of our good quality children's literature, advised some teachers on available books for their topic/theme and how to use a book to best advantage over a long period of time looking for drama and writing opportunities. Their Literacy Advisor was present and reinforced the methods I demonstrated and discussed. She reassured them that these methods would all fit into the new Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.

Lesley's active verb use—"delivered," "demonstrated," "advised," and "discussed"—shows a positive and proactive stance toward her presentations. Though she still felt stretched in terms of her social ability to stand up and speak with authority in front of a group of strangers, she pushed herself to do it, because she staunchly believed in the methods she was advocating. And just as the school's Literacy Advisor both reinforced Lesley's methods and reassured her staff about alignment with official programmes, Lesley felt strongly that her experience as a classroom teacher—who followed through on these methods on a day-do-day basis—would offer even more reassurance.

During my last visit, I went with Lesley to a local primary school where she talked with two teachers who held leadership responsibilities in their building. They explained that they wanted Lesley's help in rethinking their curriculum. One said, "Like many schools we often try to fit everything in, and we feel like we don't give anything justice. We skim across everything. We've latched onto QCA, because when it first came out it was the thing to do, and the planning was there for you. But we've got to the point where we know it's not working. We're hoping you can help us find a way forward." This teacher's lament is a common one—the QCA units were not only highly recommended, but they were also appealing because the "planning was there." Still, the ease of following another's plans to the letter put the focus on particular content, rather than the *necessary skills for creative thinking* within a variety of situations.



Lesley began by reassuring them that creative curricular ideas were not “airy fairy! ‘We’re going to be creative today!’ It isn’t losing the rigour.” She and Linda used QCA as a “starting point” and still focused on “the learning outcomes.” She outlined the mantle project, explaining that they had covered the QCA content on the Great Fire of London in a few days, “but then for the next three weeks we actually did an investigation to do with architecture.” Lesley provided highlights of the cross-curricular aspects of the project, stressing the “relevance” of the work. Though she admitted that it was “hard to plan” because of the need for flexibility in following the children’s ideas, she felt that the enjoyment and the intellectual stimulation that resulted was worth it for both children and teachers.

The idea of intellectual stimulation for teachers was key to her argument. She talked about another AST session she conducted in which she had demonstrated a variety of drama techniques and “the first thing one of the teachers asked was ‘Where will I find it on the internet?’ And I said, ‘You won’t find it on the internet; you’re going to have to think of these things for yourself. You’ll have to pick your starting points.’ And I could see her face clouding over because it wasn’t going to be handed to her. The whole point of this is to make you a teacher again!”

Lesley knew that what she was asking was both time-consuming and mentally challenging, but she believed even more that the effort would bring back the vibrancy of a teacher’s professional life. To “have something handed to you” by simply going on line and pulling off instruction to follow step-by-step, was to *not think*, and Lesley, if anything, was all about thinking skills.

The teachers seemed both intrigued and tentative, looking for ways to justify the difference between their curriculum and that advocated by Lesley and Linda. They brought up the fact that Bexhill had had many resources over the years—book money, Cap-a-Pie input, a researcher, etc. Lesley agreed, but said that many of the activities she was suggesting could be done with few resources. They wondered if Bexhill had particularly small class sizes, but their school actually had a better teacher-to-pupil ratio than Bexhill. They thought that the reason this kind of curriculum worked was because Linda and Lesley were Key Stage One teachers, and they questioned whether Lesley thought these ideas could “transfer across to Key Stage Two.” Lesley laughingly responded: “I think I’m going to be in Key Stage Two next year, so I’m going to have to stick to me guns.” Lesley’s responses were both direct and reassuring; she didn’t shy away from the difficult parts of such endeavours, but she was clear about the rewards.

This same balance could be applied to the AST work itself. It took a tremendous amount of organisation for Lesley to contact schools, prepare and present INSET materials, and to be on call for follow-up questions whether on the phone or in subsequent visits, especially since she had to do much of the work without Linda. In my final interview with the teachers I asked them about the increasing demands on their professional lives, and Lesley talked about her AST role:

Shelby: Do you think four years ago you would have seen yourself doing the kinds of things you're doing professionally now?

Lesley: Definitely not! It's like the AST thing. You know, I really miss Linda in the social sense of her being with people. Every time I've got to go, I've just been sick beforehand. I've got to walk into situations I don't know. I've got to talk to people I don't know. It was never a situation I would put myself in before. Obviously the money helps, but the main motivation for me to do it is that I really do believe in it, and I really want people to try it. I really want it to be a *normal* way of working. I don't want us to be in isolation. I do believe in it, and that's what forces me to do it. That's what forced us into presenting at the likes of Leicester or the Glass Works or whatever. If Joy had said, "Who fancies doing a talk?" we wouldn't have even thought to volunteer. So obviously that was a complete shift in our world.

Linda: Like Lesley, it's just been an amazing experience. And I do miss not being with her on her AST work. I do miss that bit, and I feel a little bit peeved in some respects because if it happened now I would go for it like a shot.

Lesley: When I had to write the stuff down for the AST assessor, I went to Linda and I said, "Do you know what we've done? I thought it was over a long period of time and then I thought, "No, that's just been this year!" And the changes and the opportunities and the experiences have been quite incredible.

Lesley felt strongly that Linda was more socially at ease with strangers, and the work would have been easier with Linda at her side. Still, Lesley's strong belief in what she had learned was enough to help her conquer her fear of entering into unknown situations. Most importantly, not only did she want their creative curriculum to be a normal way of working, she wanted it for others. Both she and Linda had felt somewhat isolated in their thinking, and they wanted to spread the word beyond the multiple formal and informal conversations they'd shared with colleagues at Bexhill. Even though Linda had declined the invitation to apply for an AST position in the beginning of the year—largely in consideration of her difficult class—now she felt she would “go for it like a shot.” Together they had experienced a “complete shift in [their] world.” And now instead of avoiding volunteering for conference presentations, they viewed these experiences as “incredible” opportunities.

Underlying both Linda and Lesley's comments about professional opportunities to spread the word to other teachers is their constant commitment to the education of young children. On my last visit I was able to see this in action again as we took the eight target children from their classes back to the Ouseburn Valley to visit Tim Bailey and xsite architecture once more. Each of Tim's eight architectural colleagues showed the children the particular plans they were working on, and the children seemed fascinated by the images on the computer that could spin and show different angles of the designs. As we moved from project to project, Tim explained some of the aspects of the work. “What Jane's got on her screen is called a technical drawing. These are the drawings that we would give to a builder to build the building. And these are the sections. It's cut down the middle so you can see what's inside.”

The work was widely varied—one architect was working on a project that celebrated the life cycle of the salmon, another showed the design for a community room, and still another showed the features of a children's playground she was designing, which had been short listed in a competition and ultimately won second place. Tim showed us the studio of an artist intern currently working in the office. And he took us through their architectural library pointing out the magazines and many books that helped his staff “find out what's going on in the world about architecture.”

We then went to a conference room, where the children spread out their drawings and shared some of their favourites with Tim. Whether their designs were quite real (a staircase for a theatre) or quite imaginative (a room made entirely of crisps), Tim showed respect for the children’s ideas through compliments, but more importantly through serious questions asking them to justify their choices: “Would that window belong in a castle?” “What’s the top of that table made of and why is it important?” “How does that colour make you feel?” “Is that room different from that room? How so?” “Why did you take a photo of that building? What was interesting about it?”

Tim then shared some building materials, and the children reached out eagerly to touch the surfaces and reflect on their make up. He showed them slate, corian, oak, and concrete products, and they tried to guess where these materials might be best used. When he showed them a surface that resembled a set of rough, rolling hills, he asked:

Tim: Where would you find that? On the floor of the bathroom?

Chorus: No!

Liam: Well, if you’ve got itchy feet! You could put it in a small spot and put tiles all around it and when you get out of the bath and you’ve got an itchy foot, you can just itch your foot.

Tim: Very clever. I want to see that! Where else do you think you’ll find this one?



Tim asked his question facetiously, but when Liam came up with an implausible albeit well-explained solution, Tim complimented him on the clever aspects of his conjecture before continuing to push on more practical ideas. This pattern repeated itself again and again with Tim and the teachers as they nudged the children to think logically without losing their imaginative space, which is no doubt the way architects must approach new projects.

We then left to walk along the Ouseburn, with Tim asking questions of the children along the way. He pointed out older and newer buildings in the area. He talked about the plans for some of the derelict buildings. One, for example, was soon to be converted to a restaurant. But the children pointed out things they noticed as well and asked their own questions.

After our walk, we took the children over to Seven Stories for them to see the museum, especially the new exhibit—“We’re Going on a Bear Hunt: Picturebook Adventures”—a showcase of 10 classic picturebooks. They stared at the illustrations from books both familiar and strange and watched a video of Michael Rosen (1989) enacting his famous *We’re Going on a Bear Hunt*, but more importantly they played. Just as in the Rosen story, they zipped through things, stumble-tripping along the way. They took turns sleeping in a bed from one story and dressed up in the clothes of another. They climbed into a cave of a third story and managed to scare themselves even without the bear. When we climbed to the attic, they discovered another dress up box and decked themselves out as storybook characters, putting on multiple mini plays. Finally, we dined in the museum’s Cool Cat Café, and they looked out the picture window to discover they could see down into Seven Stories’ symbolic boat—the Sea Sang Song.



Surprisingly, none of the children commented on the fact that they had spent several weeks designing a children's centre, and now they were right in the middle of one of England's most famous children's spaces. Even before we left for our day's adventure, I was looking at Adam's portfolio with him. He showed me his various designs for the centre and explained:

Adam: This is for a building that should be built by now. It used to be an old factory, and now it's a play area for children. This is the reception room.

Shelby: What's this here?

Adam: It's a table for the children to do drawings.

Shelby: Ah! Fantastic. And what's this?

Adam: That's where the grown-ups sit having a meal.

In *Seven Stories*, the children had played, drawn, and even had a meal, yet not one of them asked whether this was indeed the building they had designed. Even though Adam assured me that their centre "should be built by now," he didn't wonder if these were the tables they had sketched or the café and bookshop they had imagined.

I wondered about this with Lesley, especially because Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton (1995) make it clear that the children involved in mantle-of-the-expert work should know that their work represents a fiction:

Shelby: I reread the Dorothy Heathcote book recently, and something in her theory seemed to veer from your choices. Dorothy's children know that the situation isn't real. They know it's an imaginary thing. And you decided not to do that.

Lesley: I know. It's like the dragon. They know it's not real, but we haven't at any point discussed that it's not real. But I know that they know, and we're playing the game together. But I think for the architect thing, if we'd told them that it was a game, I don't think they would have believed in themselves as much. I mean, they really did believe that Tim needed them to get stuff done.

Shelby: It adds another level of commitment?

Lesley: Yes, they had to believe that Tim believed in them. I mean we did question ourselves, knowing that we weren't doing it exactly the way Dorothy says it's supposed to.

Shelby: But it goes along with everything you've said about creating your own curriculum. You take the ideas—

Lesley: And you adapt them to your own way of working. I suppose she's talking more about the ethical side of it. Is it ethical to trick children? So I do understand what she's saying, but I still don't think we would have got what we got if we'd let them know it was all imaginary.

Still, it seems likely that—just as with the dragon—the children knew. Heathcote argues that children involved in mantle-of-the-expert work “*must never be asked to create the actual objects*. If they had to do this their inexpertness would become immediately apparent” (p. 18). She goes on to say, “So *conventions* are used to avoid the authentic making. They in actuality *will* design, demonstrate, explain, draw to scale, or cut out templates exactly *as such firms would*. So in every way *except* making the actual life-size fabrication with authentic materials, the class will function as people sharing the work of the enterprise” (p. 18).

Thus, process takes precedent over product. In mantle-of-the-expert work, the enterprise is the event, not the eventual outcome. The children in Linda and Lesley's rooms had designed, demonstrated, and drawn to scale, and they'd done it because they knew that Tim *and their teachers* believed in them. Similar points can be made about their teachers. They knew they were allowed to veer off a particular course if they felt it was right for their children.

Certainly, their decision raises questions, for Lesley is right in emphasising the potential ethical aspects of their choice. Edmiston (personal communication) explains that mantle-of-the-expert inquiries are “always us willingly suspending our disbelief and is never deception.” His concern was mostly focused on teachers who might not have Linda and Lesley's skills nor the same caring and close relationship with their children. He continues:

I have to ask myself what they would have said if a child had asked, “Is this real?” And I really think that question has to be asked on behalf of someone who might think it is okay, or even better, to not tell the children that the project is like ones that are being done by Tim and other architects, but is made up for them.

I have to disagree with the teachers when they say that the children would not have been as committed to the work if they had told them it was only imagined.... I have found that children, especially young children, will commit to work when they know it's pretend. It may be harder to negotiate initially, but they will commit to engaging activities and to the project as a whole as well as to the creation of all the artifacts, and they'll talk to me quite seriously as if I am an architect or anyone else they want to imagine meeting. Further, when they know it's imagined, then they can get in on the invention of what might happen and who they might encounter.

When I talked with Linda and Lesley about Edmiston's view, they both felt that if asked they would have chosen honesty over deception any day of the week. Lesley wrote:

In defence of our "deception," I might add that we told the children that Tim was asking for their opinions and help, which he was in reality interested in. I would also say that later in the year, after doing the *Dragon's Egg* mantle with them, we realised that they probably knew all along that this and the Ouseburn project were imaginary. In the *Dragon's Egg*, we didn't ask them to suspend belief, but they seemed to join us in our "pretend play" to look after the dragon. In our classrooms there are unspoken understandings, in which Linda and I feel we connected enough with our kids to be engaged in their imaginary world.

We have to think as parents, did we deceive our own children every time we read them a fairy story or took them to the theatre or cinema, if we did not *explicitly* tell them beforehand "by the way this isn't real." Could we have captured their imagination and engaged them in the story in the same way and enjoyed that shared wonder with them? Brian is passionate in his belief, as we are in our belief that this "deception" is not for our gain, but is part of being a child and having a sense of wonder and believing anything is possible.

But in many ways, I agree with Brian, and I would approach it differently now, with added experience and confidence, planning a "way in" that was more of a joint effort with the kids. Just by using simple terms like "If we were going to do this, I wonder what we could do?" is enough to get the children to commit without saying it's actually going to happen, so in the future I would prepare my "way in" more with this type of language.

Certainly, Lesley and Linda could have informed the children from the get-go that they were working in an entirely imagined space, but in the Ouseburn project they chose not to, and they had strong reasoning for their choices. Edmiston's counter argument is based on worry that the discovery of deception could lead to children's disillusionment and harm classroom relationships that are so carefully built up among teachers and children. And in the classrooms of less capable teachers this could easily be the case. But in four years of close observation of their teaching and studying their caring commitment to children's learning, I can't imagine a space where they would lose the trust of their children.

While we could argue this philosophical choice in more depth (and we have!), in the context of their own growing professional development, it is perhaps more important that they made the choice, knowing that they were bumping up against some of the theoretical underpinnings of mantle-of-the-expert inquiry. Even the expertise of Dorothy Heathcote and Brian Edmiston didn't stop them from trusting in their own expertise. When I presented Edmiston's argument to them, rather than immediately back down, they thought carefully about his question, and they knew it was not the case of one being right and the other wrong. Instead, it was an intriguing instructional query and allowed them to continue the conversation about their own ongoing learning, rethinking possibilities as well as how to use language as a "way in" to their next endeavours. Certainly the ethical question gave them pause, but they knew that their curriculum was no trick. Together, they had created conventions that allowed their children to engage deeply in the enterprise. And the enterprise itself gave them an opportunity to further develop their children's "sense of wonder" and belief that "anything is possible."

Summary

On the day of the Ouseburn trip as I sat looking over Adam's portfolio, he provided details on several of his sketches. When it was time to catch the minibus he quietly closed his portfolio. He then sighed and turned to me and said, "It's like looking back in time!" This "research story" (Parker, 2007) has been an opportunity to look back in time at two teachers, two artists, one researcher, and the children they encountered over four years of Creative Partnerships. Over this period of time, the adults and the varying classes of children entered into a variety of enterprises—from small scenes to major productions to mantle-of-the-expert inquiry. In my closing interview with Linda and Lesley, I told them that if they ever needed anything from me, they only had to call. I told them I knew how much they had given me over the years, and Linda laughingly lamented, "Our youth!" I couldn't agree more, though I would also argue that the project took up much of my ever-ebbing youth as well. Still, it's critical here to summarise what we all gained as we think about the arc of Creative Partnerships from beginnings to endings and on to new beginnings.

First of all, Creative Partnerships is taking a big chance in their effort to transform schooling. As Julian Sefton-Green (2007) explains: "Creative Partnerships has serious ambitions. By any standard, it is a significant and substantial attempt to make a difference to the quality, purpose and effectiveness of young people's learning in schools" (p. 2). In his attempt to "lay out some of the challenges facing Creative Partnerships as it tries to find a language and an evidence base that captures its successes," he argues that much help is needed from the "research community, as well as finding ways to weave together evidence which can accurately describe the full range of effects of the programme" (p. 8). Furthermore, he suggests that the impact of Creative Partnerships "can only really be assessed over a longer period of time. We need to see the long-term effect of such programmes before we can comment on their impact" (p. 4).

Having been with the teachers, artists, and children for four years, I feel I can safely comment. Three of the four years really concentrated on the children's linguistic growth as they engaged in drama-based activities with artists and teachers. The National Director of Creative Partnerships, Paul Collard, describes the "range of benefits" that come from such efforts as: "linguistic development, more confident students, more motivated students who are more committed to education, more emotionally literate students, more curious students, imaginative kids with lots of ideas, students with improved capacity to take intelligent risks, etc." (p. 3). I believe that colleagues and I were able to provide ample evidence of this in a variety of publications (Heath & Wolf, 2004; Wolf, 2006; Wolf, 2008) as we tracked the language and learning development of the Bexhill children. But there are a number of positive features that impact on teachers and artists as well, and that is the point of this piece.

Mantle-of-the-expert work is typically characterised by "the big lie." While this certainly strikes an odd note, Cecily O'Neill (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) explains:

In developing this highly articulated approach to the themes and materials of the [mantle-of-the-expert] curriculum, Dorothy Heathcote is proposing a paradox. The teaching is authentic, and yet it achieves its authenticity through "the big lie," since it operates within a powerful *imagined* context, created through the inner dramatic rules of time, space, role, and situation. This contextualization is the key to its effect. Thinking *from within* a situation immediately forces a different kind of thinking. (p. vii)

Heathcote's paradox insists on the fact that the teaching is authentic, and it's critical to remember that while Linda and Lesley's children did not engage in the "actual making," the teachers did. They created the curriculum. They planned the instruction. They used the QCA materials as a mere "starting point," but then designed the rest themselves—including challenges from Tim, couriers waiting in the wings, multiple resources, and even a city council letter asking for a reformulation of plans.

Creating their own curriculum was akin to thinking from “within a situation,” and it did nudge them into a “different kind of thinking.” While neither teacher had ever followed QCA suggested curricula lock step, their new insights into drama strategies, the power of fine literature, enquiry-based instruction, and *mantle of the expert* made them even more resistant to traditional techniques. In addition, all this new input moved them beyond mere resistance to the revitalising work of professional engagement. As Lesley emphasised, “The whole point of this is to make you a teacher again!”

Their resistance and revitalisation emerged in relationships. Without the support of caring colleagues, would the results have been the same? The answer is unlikely. Indeed, professional development is often most effective when teachers stretch into more expansive ways of thinking about their content with colleagues who have varying kinds of expertise. Ball and Cohen (1999) capture this dynamic:

...we signal the need for teachers to be linked with a wider discourse beyond their local circle of colleagues, whether through subject matter organizations, study groups, university-school partnerships, or other groups or networks. An important goal should be to expand the community of educators and education resources to which teachers turn to inform and support their work, a shift from the pattern in which teachers focus exclusively on their own work or the work of those close by, with little external contribution, challenge, or support. (pp. 18-19)

Linda and Lesley’s working relationship with Mark and Gordon as well as with me meant intellectual benefits for all of us, as teachers, artists, and researchers provided their individual take on problems posed and ways of solving them. What might be an intriguing way to approach this piece of literature? What drama strategies would up the ante on the children’s talk? How might we capture what the children are learning? Where do we go from here?

Indeed, like Linda and Lesley, Mark and Gordon have taken the learning from these multiple and invariably rich conversations and folded them into new life plans. Gordon recently wrote me that Theatre Cap-a-Pie “has pretty much stopped being a theatre company and is evolving into a creative learning training and consultancy practice.” Mark wrote me as well and reflected on what he had learned in the years of partnership with Linda and Lesley, and how it had changed his practice:

At present I am developing a course called “The clown in the classroom,” which aims to draw on the main clown principles (openness, humour, status, vulnerability) and examine how teachers can use these in the classroom with children to enhance the curriculum. I’m also considering the possibility of setting up more formal week or two-week-long international training courses in Europe. Teachers/participants would come to a venue (probably during one of the half term breaks or the summer) and would be taken through a range of strategies from drama conventions, improvisation games and creative ways of unlocking children’s imaginations.

Working with Linda and Lesley had a number of effects on the focus I now want my work to take. Forming such a good partnership reinforced the importance of good relationships and giving relationships time to grow. I obviously learned a lot from them about the curriculum, planning and the politics of working in a school as well as giving children space and time to think and setting up a safe and trusting space for the children to work in. But the biggest impact was undoubtedly seeing Linda and Lesley find a new confidence and take the work forward to a new level.

Although the work we carried out together had a huge effect on the children, seeing Linda and Lesley’s energy and enthusiasm to take on the drama conventions and integrate them into their everyday teaching really hit home how important it is to share this practice directly with teachers. For years my practice focused on the children and, important as they are, I began to realise through working with Linda and Lesley that the real legacy in the school are the teachers. This is the main reason why my practice over the last few months has swung almost exclusively (apart from my own performing) to teacher training. Start with the teachers, and the work will ripple out into the lives of the children, the wider community through parents, and the whole of the educational establishment.

Start with the teachers. Mark’s advocacy for a new beginning place for educational reform is clearly at odds with his earlier practice. But through “good relationships” that were given the time to “grow,” both teachers and artists had developed “a new confidence” to take their work to “a new level.”

Backed by the solidity of a sound relationship, people prepare themselves to take on more risk. They start on new ventures (such as Mark's "Clown in the Classroom" or Linda and Lesley's mantle-of-the-expert project), they reach out to new people (Tim Bailey at xsite architecture), and they take on new challenges (Lesley's AST work and both teachers' conference presentations). Indeed, Mark wrote that the ripple effect of starting with teachers was exemplified by Linda and Lesley's "frequent visits to conferences to share good practice."

Reaching back to the support systems we had built for each other and reaching out to new faces and places allowed Linda and Lesley to make thoughtful decisions about their practice. Fullan (2007) reminds us:

There is no getting around the *primacy of personal contact*. Teachers need to participate in skill-training workshops, but they also need to have one-to-one and group opportunities to receive and give help and more simply to *converse* about the meaning of change. Under these conditions teachers learn how to use an innovation as well as to judge its desirability on more information-based grounds; they are in a better position to know whether they should accept, modify, or reject the change. This is the case with regard to both externally developed ideas and innovations decided upon or developed by other teachers. *Purposeful interaction is essential for continuous improvement.* (p. 139)

Over the four years, Linda and Lesley were given multiple opportunities for conversations about change, and the intellectual engagement of such discussions led them to look deeply into their practice and see where, when, how, and most importantly why they would make particular changes. As Sir Ken Robinson (2006) argues: "Intelligence is wonderfully interactive. The brain isn't divided into compartments. In fact, creativity, which I define as the process of having original ideas that have value, more often than not comes about through the interaction of different disciplinary ways of seeing things."

During one of my last visits, another Creative Partnerships researcher interviewed Linda and Lesley, and they began telling him about all the conferences where they presented:

Linda: Ah! That was really a scary feeling. But we've been to a number of things.

Lesley: We went to Leicester's Boot Camp, and we've been down to London with the children for National CP for the children to present their work. We've done workshops at the Glass Centre.

Linda: And the Manchester conference.

Lesley: We did a workshop there. I mean those are things that Linda and I would have run a mile from in the past.

Linda: And we probably should still!

Chorus: [Laughter]

Lesley: But I think it's like the strength of your convictions. Once you've started something that—We really did believe in what we're doing, so we want other people to try it. So that's what motivated us 'cause neither of us are career people. We're not interested in climbing the ladder and being recognised in that sense, but we really did want other ordinary teachers to give things a go.

R: What specifically are you asking them to give a go to? Is it a specific type of practice or attitude?

Lesley: Well, both. Drama techniques just to be integrated into their normal, everyday classroom practice. It addresses all learning styles. It motivates the children. It changes ways of thinking.

Linda: We want them to take risks. That's what we've had to do. Because it's so easy to download the QCA units and follow them slavishly. And it works, I suppose, up to a point. It works for some children. Whereas what we're saying is we would like people not to do that. But to start off with being flexible. Yes, look for opportunities where you can be cross curricular. Try and be a bit more creative about how you deliver it and what you expect the children to do. So it is risk-taking. We've taken an awful lot of risks.

Risk is inherent in taking on new challenges or new ways of thinking. But the strength of their convictions made them give it a go, and they wanted others to try it as well. They felt strongly that they were "ordinary" teachers uninterested in climbing the "career ladder" for personal gain, but they saw the possibilities of extraordinary events in the lives of teachers and children if only they were willing to "try and be a bit more creative."

Fullan (2007) argues: “The circumstances of teaching, including the added pressure of accountability, ask a lot of teachers in terms of daily maintenance and expectations for student success for all, and give back little in the time needed for planning, constructive discussion, thinking, and just plain rewards and time for composure.” This was born out in our final interview when Linda, Lesley, and I talked about how rarely teachers have the opportunity to think or simply get out into the world.

Shelby: I think teachers are so used to being deprofessionalised.

Linda: Yes, and on the days when we’ve been out and about at Waterstone’s, at Seven Stories, at the Sage to plan, meeting with Mark and Gordon, you see other people living their lives. And it lifts your spirits. You then become curious! Because I think teachers aren’t curious.

Shelby: They’re not *encouraged* to be curious.

Linda: So you see these people going about, and you wonder what are they doing? And we see there’s a life out there, another world. And we’ve been pressed into this life. But then you go out and you say, “Ah! There’s life. Now we can get down to it.” And you can see that life occurs whether you’re locked up in a school or not.

Lesley: And that’s the life that the kids are going to live in as well. You know, what in this outside world can we plan for our kids to see? What are we doing in the classroom that’s going to make them part of this world? So for us, working with the students from Sunderland University or going to Manchester where we met Tim—we met outside people that live in the real world.

Linda: It’s a world that we would never have access to if it weren’t for CP.

Shelby: You’re right. It’s so important to talk to people who aren’t in your world. Because that’s the thing you’re always trying to do for your kids—to give them wider experiences. But teachers need that too.

Lesley: And I think that teachers are a certain breed, and we all can be sort of incestuous. We tend to be with other teachers outside school time. We talk about our jobs outside of school time. And that's good because it's a part of your life, and you're dedicated to it. But it's also narrow minded, and you only have one viewpoint and that sort of thing. So it's been great that we've met artists and architects and all sorts of people who have interesting lives.

Curiosity, exploration, and intellectual interaction lie at the heart of this conversation. Through the support of Creative Partnerships and the building of relationships among teachers, artists, and researchers "life" became visible. Rather than "pressed" into the traditional curriculum or "locked in a school," CP provided the teachers with opportunities to talk with and think with people typically out of their sphere. They entered the "real world," and it was this world that they wished to make available for their children.

As the teachers met to plan at the Sage or scoured the bookstores at Seven Stories or Waterstone's or sent emails back and forth with Tim, they saw the work of regeneration all around. And as they watched the new spaces replacing old places, they conceived of a plan for a hypothetical children's centre that would help their children take on the role of architectural expertise and see possibilities for their future lives. Of the experience, Tim Bailey wrote: "The children appear to have engaged with real lives and roles and believed them—this ought to be informative but also reassuring that they can see the world (adult or otherwise) as a living, working, changing and problematic place." Still, as Cecily O'Neill (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) explains:

Role play is an inadequate term for the kind of engagement required. The students inhabit their roles as experts in the enterprise with increasing conviction, complexity, and truth. They grow into their roles in a way that goes far beyond the functional as they experience the enlargement of both identity and capacity within the tasks they undertake and the challenges they encounter. (p. viii)

Over the four years of this creative partnership, Linda and Lesley have taken on many new roles with "increasing conviction, complexity, and truth," and as a result they have simultaneously experienced "the enlargement of both identity and capacity" that will hopefully impact on the learning of their future pupils in serious ways. Through the tasks they have taken on and the challenges that they have both set and met, they have moved from the "as if" world of imagined expertise in drama to the very real world of becoming experts in drama themselves.

List of Photographs

- Page 1: Sea Song Sang, the Seven Stories boat (Boat Builder & Photographer Andy Comley)
- Page 2: Seven Stories rear aspect (image: Colin Davison)
- Page 5: Theatre Cap-a-pie 'Mary Lou' workshop at The Store, Dipton, County Durham (Colin Davison)
- Page 6: Two Y2 boys discussing Van Allsburg illustration (Colin Davison)
- Page 9: Linda discussing Mary Lou with Y2 children while Shelby takes notes (Colin Davison)
- Page 17: Bethany, Linda, and Lesley talking (Keith Pattison)
- Page 25: Mark Labrow following children's directions for Mary Lou (Colin Davison)
- Page 34: Seven Stories (Colin Davison)
- Page 37: Children studying Van Allsburg illustrations (Colin Davison)
- Page 50: Tim's Ouseburn photo quiz (Tim Bailey)
- Page 51: Kira's bridge
- Page 54: Beth's mushroom house
- Page 57: Liam's couch design
- Page 62: Tim testing support (Lesley Watson)
- Page 64: Building bridges (Lesley Watson)
- Page 69: Children designing Ouseburn houses (Lesley Watson)
- Page 73: Children touching reflective stone (Colin Davison)
- Page 74: Child pointing out a feature to Tim and Lesley (Colin Davison)

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Credits

John McGagh began working for Creative Partnerships Durham Sunderland at its inception in 2002 after several years working in literature development in the North East of England. In previous work on the series *Dramatic Learning in the Primary School* as well as current work on this monograph *The Playwright's Life for Me!*, John has been a key advisor. Through multiple meetings with multiple parties, researchers, Creative Partnerships directors, and the Headteacher of Bexhill, Joy Lowther, John repeatedly demonstrated the essence of 'creative partnerships'. His insights, expertise, and diplomacy helped guide the monograph through the myriad decisions involved in the creation and completion of any academic text. With an ear for editing, an eye for design, and the persistence needed to acquire necessary permissions, John's contributions helped bring this monograph to life.

The author would also like to thank Lorna Fulton, former Director of Creative Partnerships Durham Sunderland, for her support in the development and delivery of this research programme.

Sumo is a specialist design consultancy completely immersed in the arts and cultural sectors.

We monitor audience motivations, keep abreast of what's new, speak at industry events, write articles for the trade press, record trends and even conduct our own research. We spend our lives understanding museums, galleries, theatres, festivals, arts events and venues.

Crucially, this helps us to understand the people who visit them. How they think, act, react and buy. After all, the success of any venue or event is dependent on the audience. Ultimately, they vote with their feet.

That's why our design approach is centred around the audience — what motivates them and how can we persuade them to act?

Creative Partnerships is the Government's flagship creative learning programme, designed to develop the skills of young people across England, raising their aspirations and achievements, and opening up more opportunities for their futures. This world-leading programme is transforming teaching and learning across the curriculum.

Creative Partnerships is set to become an independent organisation in April 2009 – under a new name: **Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE)**.

The new organisation will have its headquarters in Newcastle, where the cultural renaissance of the North East - led by such organisations as The Sage Gateshead, Seven Stories, Customs House, Tyne and Wear Museums, Live Theatre, BALTIC and MIMA, all with impressive education and learning programmes of their own – has created the perfect environment for the new national agency to grow and thrive.

Creative Partnerships Durham Sunderland operates over a large geographical area, covering urban and rural schools.

CPDS has been working since 2002 with cultural sector partners and schools to find new ways to enhance, diversify and enrich learning in the classroom. CPDS aims to deliver a research-focussed programme of work through partnerships and collaborations between partner schools and the cultural sector that extends creative learning, develops new knowledge and brokers new collaborations and cultural production within school settings across Durham and Sunderland.

The CPDS programme has been driven by research and developed through continuous learning and consultation. A key programme priority has been the development of long-term partnership relationships that create intensive work with groups of young people, an emphasis on involving teachers in the planning and delivery team and a commitment to delivering high quality results in relation to brokerage/curation, collaborative practice and programme content/outcomes.

Bexhill Primary School

Since 2002 Creative Partnerships Durham Sunderland has supported pupils and teachers at Bexhill Primary to work intensively with the dramatic arts. Professional actors helped pupils create plays during short-term residencies. Teachers began after-school Drama Clubs and brought numerous techniques of dramatic production and critique into their thinking about the entire curriculum.

Examination of Key Stage tests across subject areas revealed that the tests expected pupils to use language in ways not generally found in daily classroom life. In addition to the joy of work in the dramatic arts, teachers at Bexhill saw participation in the thinking, creating, and critiquing that come with drama as a way to improve language fluency of primary-level pupils.

There is a positive community spirit, community association and the local church. (The library is no longer on site).

Bexhill Primary is situated in a housing estate on the outskirts of Sunderland. Built in the early sixties, the housing has been attractively upgraded. Bexhill stands in a green environment, characterised by tree plantings and ‘hides’—in which both children and adults can relax. The school plays an important role in a community with high levels of unemployment, a range of family contexts and little cultural diversity. There is a positive community spirit, strengthened by links with the on-site library (take out), community association and the local church. The school has a roll of around 320 (change) 3-11 year-olds and seeks to raise aspirations through close involvement with families. Speaking, listening and social skills are major foci for the early years. The development of oral confidence and facility remains a focus through key stages 1 and 2. While the school performs well in national tests, it strives to raise attainment. The school also holds ArtsmarkGold (change). Bexhill children are engaged in a range of quality arts experiences, which broaden their cultural experience and encourage them to develop skills and attitudes, which could enrich their lives and offer future employment and leisure options. Bexhill is determined to build language and thinking skills through an innovative approach to the curriculum—believing that drama-rich curricula and opportunities to develop pupil voice can take children’s understanding beyond their own experience and encourage higher order language skills. Bexhill is also a training school for Initial Teacher Training and is committed to sharing expertise with others.

xsite architecture was established in November 2000 as a practice with high quality design principles at its core. Offering architectural, urban environment, project management and design consultancy services, **xsite** aims to effect change in people's perceptions of what is possible through its involvement with high profile and quality projects in the arts, residential, community and commercial sectors.

At the core of the work of **xsite architecture** is the belief that people are central to a successful process and a successful product: an open process encourages ownership of the project and underpins its future value to the community it sets out to serve.

Principal, **Tim Bailey**, has been an architect since 1992 and has been involved with a diverse range of realised projects with contract values between £50,000 and £6million throughout the North East and London.

Born in the North East, **Tim** made a positive decision to stay in the region after graduating from Newcastle University. He created a practice with a strong design ethos underpinned by a realistic commercial approach to projects. Working in the retail, leisure, residential and commercial sectors, **Tim** has developed a strong relationship with the arts sector: working collaboratively and for arts clients.

Shelby Wolf is professor of education and an award-winning teacher and educational scholar. In 2006, she was invited to join the ranks of the *University of Colorado President's Teaching Scholars* —a guild of faculty from all three CU campuses who excel in teaching, scholarship, and research. Their mission is to endorse teaching excellence throughout the university. Dr. Wolf's research centers on children's language and learning through engagement in literature and collaborative as well as creative modes of expression—discussion, writing, the visual arts, and drama. Her most recent book, *Interpreting Literature with Children* (Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004), portrays her close work with teachers as co-researchers in the study of children's literary learning. She has worked within numerous school-change programs to validate the perspectives of teachers who undertake enquiry into how learning works in their classrooms. She is a senior author of *Houghton Mifflin English*, a textbook series devoted to helping children improve as writers. With Shirley Brice Heath, she wrote *The Braid of Literature: Children's Worlds of Reading* (Harvard University Press, 1992).

More recently, Dr. Wolf joined again with Shirley Brice Heath to look closely at how language, attention, inspiration, and collaboration within two schools in England changed through artistic partnership. One set of booklets reports on *Visual Learning in the Community School* (Creative Partnerships, 2004) while another set concentrates on *Dramatic Learning in the Primary School* (Creative Partnerships, 2005). Dr. Wolf has continued this work on her own, and her latest publications are "The Mermaid's Purse: Looking Closely at Young Children's Art and Poetry" (*Language Arts*, 2006), "The mysteries of Creative Partnerships" (*Journal of Teacher Education*, 2008) as well as a monograph entitled *A Playwright's Life for Me! Young Children's Language and Learning Through Drama* (Creative Partnerships, 2006).

Dr. Wolf is now senior editor of *The Handbook of Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature* with her editorial colleagues Karen Coats, Patricia Enciso, and Christine Jenkins. The editors have assembled a group of internationally known scholars from education, English, and Library and Information Science for chapter contributions as well as a group of renowned children's and young adult authors and illustrators to add their own perspectives on the field. The Handbook will be published by Routledge in 2010.

In 2007, Dr. Wolf began a new project with the Tate Modern Museum in London. She is following the progress of 12 children from two primary schools over a three-year period. Her work will focus on the “imaginative continuum” in young children and how that can be stretched to even greater capacity, not only through viewing the work of professional artists but through the children’s own creative endeavors. In the summer of 2008, Tate curators and artists Roy and Claire Smith showcased the children’s artwork in the exhibition “Looking for Change.”

From the *“Mantle” to Expertise* is a book to inspire teachers, artists, and researchers to form creative school-based partnerships. Shelby Wolf brilliantly documents and eloquently evokes her four-year journey with two passionate teachers who collaboratively developed captivating curricula and innovative pedagogy. Her research reveals core patterns of respectful relationships that all schools deserve and need in the 21st century. Wolf shows how curious, committed classroom teachers who are ready to explore the transformational potential of the dramatic arts with children, with one another, and with other professionals, can gradually create the expertise they need to develop as educational leaders. In reading this research you will hear the voices of those who know that people of all ages can become teachers and learners when they support one another in shared community responsibilities. This book is a testament to those adults and children who have harnessed the creative power of the imagination to acquire the expertise of playwrights, writers, caregivers, and others committed to designing and shaping deep learning in classrooms.

Brian Edmiston, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, School of Teaching & Learning,
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The Ohio State University

Exciting curiosity, sparking enquiry, opening up new ways of seeing and thinking and new language to think with—all are possible outcomes when drama techniques and strategies are injected into the classroom. In this engrossing research report, Wolf records the telling story of a four-year creative partnership between two Year 2 teachers and two actors that transformed the professional practice of each one. Framing their journey within Dorothy Heathcote’s “mantle-of-the-expert” approach to education, she takes us on an adventure in learning as the teachers assume and then take ownership of dramatic expertise, eventually embarking on their own remarkable projects. In one project, children aged six and seven were invited to assume the mantle of architectural expertise and the work of regeneration to “help” an architect “client” design the interiors for a children’s centre in a converted Victorian granary in Newcastle’s Ouseburn Valley. The building was Seven Stories! Wolf’s account of the children’s imaginative and considered responses to the same issues and problems that we faced in our conversion is fascinating—an illuminating reminder of the creative power unleashed when children believe that “anything is possible.” An inspiring read, not only for teachers longing to “teach again,” but also for educators in other settings who are longing to recreate their teaching.

Elizabeth Hammill OBE
Co-founder of Seven Stories, the Centre for Children’s Books

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